Wits, Shits, and Crits: The Problem of Digestive Interpretation in Pope, Swift, and Fielding

A dissertation submitted for a Ph.D. in English literature

Cornell University

Christina Susanna Black

August 2018

WITS, SHITS, AND CRITS: THE PROBLEM OF DIGESTIVE INTERPRETATION IN POPE, SWIFT, AND FIELDING

Christina Susanna Black, Ph.D.

Cornell University 2018

My readings of the abundant ingestion and excretion themes in literary works by Fielding, Swift, Montagu, and Pope propose that we can understand these topics as sustained metaphors for the bipartite issues of readers' consumption and writers' incorporation of a literary heritage into these texts. These issues were particularly salient in early eighteenth-century Britain, as printed texts become more broadly available and affordable, and readers could no longer be relied upon to have a top education and sophisticated tools of analysis. Authors like Fielding and Swift also were experimenting in new forms like the novel that had no standards for analysis. These authors were interested in and concerned about how their work and that of their contemporaries would stand up to future scrutiny. How did the changing economic incentives for writing, from courting wealthy patrons to selling in mass volume to unknown readers, affect literature's claim to everlasting value? Pope was the first English author to earn a sustainable living from his writings, but that new economic viability also spawned Grub Street hack writing, not to mention unsavory publishing practices. In this historical context, sustained metaphors of eating and digesting were a playfully denigrating way for these writers to investigate what it meant to write for consumers, even as the metaphors also revivified older literary traditions and genres by incorporating them into modern contexts. The coda includes interpretations of contemporary fecal art pieces *Cloaca* by Wim Delvoye and *Vorm-Fellows-Attitude* by artist collective Gelatin.

For my husband, Evan Bruno, who loves all puns, and who gamely visited and photographed Wim Delvoye's very stinky *Cloaca* with me on the first day of our married life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I realize it is a dubious honor to be recognized as being fundamental to the production of an excremental work. However, this is a distinction my delightful and tolerant teachers of all stripes must bear. What is good in this dissertation I owe to them.

To my extraordinary committee:
Rick Bogel, who taught me how to close read by prodding me into doing ever more.
Neil Saccamano, and how he models such thoughtful interdisciplinary readings.
Amanda Jo Goldstein, a wonderful mentor and the most generous reader.

And to many others in the Cornell English department, including but not limited to: Philip Lorenz, Paul Sawyer, Gregory Londe, Andrew Galloway, Cynthia Chase, Jeremy Braddock, Laura Brown, Harry Shaw, Jenny Mann, Ellis Hanson, and Debra Fried.

Thank you also to the Graduate School for a research travel grant, which enabled a visit to Wim Delvoye's *Cloaca* at the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart, Australia.

To my teachers at other schools:
Ros Ballaster, who taught me a love of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.
Diane Purkiss, who perhaps is even more excited about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cookbooks than even I am.
Nicholas Halmi, who seems to have not only read everything but also incorporated it into his being.
Achsah Guibbory, who performed an extraordinary semester-long close reading of Milton for our class and got me thinking about the metaphorical import of eating in literature.
Ross Hamilton, who taught me to love the eighteenth century in the first place.
Doc Shilts, in gratitude for his teaching and making me memorize some of *Doctor Faustus*.

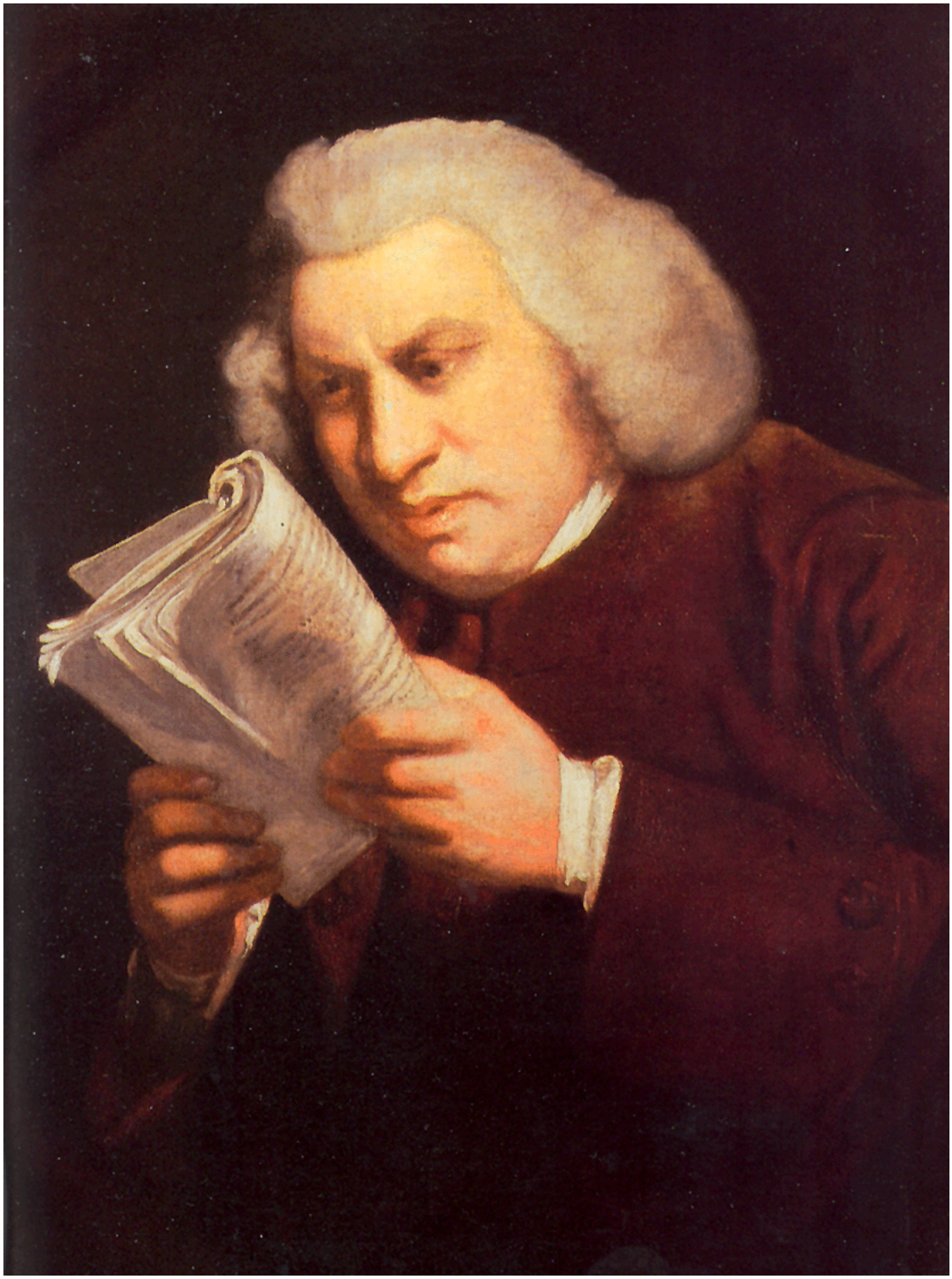
To so many friendships instrumental to this dissertation, in particular:

Mary Kuhn, whose kind and thoughtful comments on my Fielding chapter I only wish I had implemented better.
David Singerman, who assured me that I was already done at all the right times.
Laura Martin, whose close readings are delightful, unexpected, and important.
Ezra Feldman, for poker, edits, and wonderful companionship during this degree.
Abigail Marcus, who shared her love of John Donne.
Sara Schlemm, the best writing partner there is.
David Leon, if only he had illustrated this dissertation.
Emily Miner, and her constant generosity and scheming.
Lise Butler, for all the early-morning coffees and late-night edits.
Emma Silverman and Yardenne Greenspan, my workday and everyday dream team.

Most especially to my parents:
David Black, the first generation English PhD and my first professor of literature, who warned me and then thoroughly encouraged me in this endeavor, even (especially?) when it devolved into poop jokes.
Marti Black, who tirelessly cheered us both on, sent me reams of scatological cartoons and articles, and sought to always correct every split infinitive she ever found.
And my beloved siblings (and niece!)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction



Portrait of Samuel Johnson reading by Joshua Reynolds (1775)
Source: Wikipedia Commons

Scatological humor and themes in literature are nothing new. Reuters has reported that the oldest recorded joke in the world, from Sumeria in 1900 B.C., is toilet humor.[1] When explaining my dissertation subject to other literary scholars, I usually get the most nods of understanding from medievalists and early modernists. Scatology and bodily subjects were more commonplace in these earlier centuries, treated as established tropes for thinking about language and rhetoric. Important examples were the body politic, the ingestion of the word of God, and digestion as the rhetorical practice of imitation. As Maggie Kilgour explains the connection between food and word, which she dates back to Plato's *Symposium*, "Food is the matter that goes in the mouth, words the more refined substance that afterward comes out: the two are differentiated and yet somehow analogous, media exchanged among men."[2] Today, however, scatology tends to stick out like a sore thumb rather than to refer back to instantly recognized analogies, and so this dissertation elucidates how these eighteenth-century authors were reusing established scatological tropes, although usually with a difference that reflects the rapidly shifting literary scene of the eighteenth-century.

My readings of the abundant ingestion and excretion themes in Fielding, Swift, Montagu, and Pope, among others, propose that we can understand these topics as sustained metaphors for the bipartite issues of readers' consumption and writers' incorporation of a literary heritage into these texts. These issues were particularly salient at the time, as printed texts become more broadly available and affordable, and readers could no longer be relied upon to have a top education and sophisticated tools of analysis. Authors like Fielding and Swift also were experimenting in new forms like the novel that had no standards for analysis. The authors I study

[1] Here's the joke: "Something which has never occurred since time immemorial; a young woman did not fart in her husband's lap." "World's Oldest Joke Traced Back to 1900 BC."
[2] Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism*, 8.

were interested in and concerned about how their work and that of their contemporaries would stand up to future scrutiny. How did the changing economic incentives for writing, from courting wealthy patrons to selling in mass volume to unknown readers, affect literature's claim to everlasting value? Pope was the first English author to earn a sustainable living from his writings, but that new economic viability also spawned Grub Street hack writing, not to mention unsavory publishing practices. In this historical context, sustained metaphors of eating and digesting were a playfully denigrating way for these writers to investigate what it meant to write for consumers, even as the metaphors also revivified older literary traditions and genres by incorporating them into modern contexts.

This dissertation tells the story of one of the first instances of anxiety about industrialized consumption and waste – in this case, of newly affordable printed material. While Fielding, Swift, Montagu, and Pope all worry about literary waste, their texts also contain lessons in how an aesthetic eye can still redeem value in remainders. It becomes clear that at times the only reason an excremental object stands up to scrutiny is because of the type of critical attention paid to it. Each chapter thus examines an interplay between themes of appetite, digestion, and waste, and the roles of – and relationship between – writers and their critics. While there is a danger to taking a satirical object like excrement too seriously, there is an even greater danger of not taking it seriously enough – and that is too much the status quo. Martha Nussbaum cautions that anything that arouses our disgust is "always suspect or problematic, in need of special scrutiny," and very few literary scholars to date have had the guts (or stomach) to commit to a serious, book-length, and systematic study of gross particulars.[3] Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Sophie Gee's *Making Waste* (2005), and Peter Smith's *Between Two Stools*

[3] Nussbaum, "'Secret Sewers of Vice': Disgust, Bodies and the Law," 22.

(2012), notwithstanding the interregnum, are notable exceptions (and a few wonderful, scatologically-minded essays cover that gap, it should be noted). However, my treatment of the digestive metaphor in many ways has more in common with studies of cannibalism tales and metaphors in eighteenth-century British literature by Maggie Kilgour and Daniel Cottom, as I follow how they explore the literal implications of their subject in order to deepen their understanding of the metaphorical and rhetorical implications of cannibalistic analogies – or in my case, digestive.[4]

This dissertation strives to imitate another critical lineage as well: Northrup Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, which Frye acknowledges references Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* as well as Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* – in this latter word's "original sense of a trial or incomplete attempt, on the possibility of a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles, and the techniques of literary criticism."[5] Each of my chapters strives to describe an "anatomy" (a structure, an inner working) of criticism inherent to each author's work, which often takes on material, corporeal characteristics due to the prevailing, literalized digestive metaphor. Despite the fact that these authors spend so much time lambasting critics and their excremental output, ultimately they seem to have a very similar understanding to Frye's on the relationship between writers and their imagined readers and critics: "there is no way of preventing the critic from being, for better or worse, the pioneer of education and the shaper of cultural tradition."[6] These authors preemptively attack the problems of interpretation and determining standards of good writing because they acknowledge the importance of these questions both to their immediate reception and also to the longevity of their works. Studying the critical lessons embedded in

[4] Cottom, *Cannibals & Philosophers*; Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism*.
[5] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 3.
[6] Frye, 4.

these authors' literature can also add nuance to some of Frye's classic justifications for criticism, for instance, his claim, "Criticism can talk, and all the arts are dumb."[7] The constant narratorial intrusions in *Tom Jones* seem to defy this rule as they explicitly address a reader on how to interpret the story. However, as I explore, these pronouncements should not be taken as interpretive dictates separate from the rest of the story, but rather as a second part of the plot, which come together to form an entire hermeneutic only when understood in relation to each other. It is a way, for instance, of making the implied reader a character in the plot. Thus, even when the arts speak back, criticism still has a place because it approaches the issue from a different perspective which might tie it all together or discover internal contradictions.

Much of my argument in each chapter hinges on extending the logic of corporeal figures of speech, understood literally: the consumption of texts is based on appetite, which ends with partially incorporating the ingested material, and partially wasting it as well through some process of elimination. Appetite, digestion, and excretion clearly have metaphorical import for reading and writing. However, Fielding, Swift, Montagu, and Pope employ these longstanding tropes for reading and writing with a difference. They revel in literal particulars, suggesting in turn how their reader might think about the literal logic embedded in these tropes. In this sense their digestive analogies are more allegorical than metaphorical since they often occur in the context of extended scenarios rather than in the force of a single word, like "ruminate." The way these authors use these tropes may thus catch a reader off guard because of how literally they treat something in a figurative context. In this way, these texts should be read like Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, which catches you off guard because of how literally it treats something that you would hope would never be literal. Since it would be too painful (or gross, in my case) to be

[7] Frye, 4.

literal, the unrelenting internal logic has to be interpreted as a metaphor instead. *Surely he meant it as a metaphor*. And yes, it turns out, it works equally well when you read it as a metaphor.

This interplay between literal and figurative meaning is often based on the multiple meanings inherent to so many of the key terms at stake in my readings – punning – but I also believe this corporeal poetics, which insists on the materiality of the referent, could be understood in the context of social history. Starting with the mechanical creations like Vaucanson's duck (1739), "digestion" began to occur not only in organic bodies but also in increasingly industrialized corporations. "Consumption" began to signify not only a response to a basic biological need, but also to the behavior of markets, which Adam Smith went on to describe in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). After "the Statute of Anne" (1710) "copyright" became an issue for authors and booksellers for the first time, "implying that the discourse of literary property was moving away from its old foundation in the materiality of the author's manuscript."[8] Whereas previously copyright holders were thought to only have property rights over the physical books produced, this era saw the first arguments for intellectual property rights: "Though immaterial, this property was no less real and permanent, they argued, than any other kind of estate."[9] This eighteenth-century legal argument for the reality and permanence of immaterial ideas suggests an increasing identification of the logic of material goods with abstract concepts. Similarly, these authors writing about bodily processes like consumption, digestion, and excretion can be understood as hanging abstract concepts – in this case good critical practices – on some of the most immediate and concrete experiences both they and any reader would share. The legal argument also shows how, from this point on, certain formulations of

[8] Rose, *Authors and Owners*, 65.
[9] Rose, 6.

words and ideas could be understood to be proprietary. This is a strong endorsement for readers to take authors "at their word," a justification for the practice of close reading semantic choices even before English spellings were fixed in place by comprehensive dictionary projects, like that started by Samuel Johnson.

The materiality of the corporeal logic used by these authors is often so literal that it can be represented in the visual arts. There are several similarities between the detailed landscapes of Swift, Pope, and Fielding's texts and the contemporaneous satirical paintings by William Hogarth. The interplay of figurative and literal "consumption" also is represented well by Joshua Reynold's portrait of Samuel Johnson, which heads this introduction. Johnson is only tangentially related to this dissertation, which focuses on the first half of the "long eighteenth century," prior to most of Johnson's works. However, the portrait of him above illustrates the central analogy of this dissertation: how reading and interpreting resemble consumption, digestion, and laying waste to the original object. In this portrait, which Johnson purportedly disliked because he thought it made his eyes look weak, it appears as if he were devouring the book. Johnson bends back the pages in order to access the reading material more directly. Disregarding the integrity of the book's spine, he bends the book to his own will, for his own reading pleasure. Reynolds does not depict an idealized volume. There is no fancy leather cover, only the sheets with text, which no longer have a clear start or end as the pages wrap around from front to back. Johnson's book is not an ornament for a library. Rather, the book becomes Johnson's own through the intense, appetitive attention he pays it – not just as an owner of the physical property of the book but also as possessor of the ideas within it as he imbibes the text. His fingers have reshaped the manuscript materially, the page edges are individual and askew because they are well-thumbed – but the manuscript also effects his keen facial expression and

presumably the mind underneath it. Johnson and his book leave a reciprocal imprint, one on the other. This painting makes that process visible, showing how a metaphor of ingesting words might have literal and material implications.

Reynold's portrait of Johnson manifests the kind of appetitive consumption of texts that became the norm for a much broader swathe of readers than ever before in eighteenth-century Britain as printed texts became increasingly available and affordable. My chapters explore authors' anxieties about this growing literate public. Starting with Pope, moving to Fielding, and finally to Swift, their relation to each other is thematic rather than chronological, foregrounded by a discussion of metaphors of digestive incorporation in Pope before comparing the interpretive motivations of appetite and disgust in Fielding and Swift, respectively. In each, I find a connection between analogies of consumption, waste, and digestion, and the work of literary criticism.

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on Alexander Pope and his metaphors of digestion in *Peri Bathous* and *The Dunciad*. Pope is drawing on an established trope for the rhetorical practice of *imitatio* that dates back to Seneca and Petrarch. However, his emphasis on digestion is hardly ever recognized as continuing in that tradition, perhaps because of how he literalizes and continues the digestive logic to its natural, biological end in his satires. As a result, Pope's digestive metaphor speaks to how he self-consciously continues to imitate, translate, and versify even in the face of changing literary standards which begin to prioritize originality over tradition, asserting his place in a literary tradition. Pope's digestive metaphor also reveals his perception of particular challenges to rhetoric, and to good writing more generally, in an eighteenth-century context of changing copyright laws, publishing practices, and economic incentives in the book trade. The digestive metaphor thus both speaks to the past as well as to the

practice of rhetoric in Pope's own context. I explore how Pope modifies the digestive metaphor in *Peri Bathous* to satirize contemporary writers: digestive writing threatens to become both mechanical (like Vaucanson's digesting duck) and formulaic (like recipes in the burgeoning cookbook genre). However, I argue that Pope is not simply condemning digestive rhetoric, even as it becomes mechanical and formulaic. Although digestive rhetoric threatens to lay waste to the original text, it is also a method to incorporate a literary tradition into the present context, and ultimately revitalize it.

My chapter on *Tom Jones* uses the novel's infamous narratorial intrusions – especially the first one – as the key to understanding the whole thing, plot and prefaces, as a theory of interpretation based on the concept of readerly appetite: a hermeneutic of appetite. The novel's opening chapter establishes a ruling metaphor where the narrator is the host of a tavern and the reader his paying guest, a comparison with many implications for the relationship between them. The analogy simultaneously draws attention to the shifting economic incentives for authors as the book trade grew in the eighteenth century such that wealthy patrons became less important than the opinion and interest of a growing market of middle-class readers; to Fielding's self-conscious development of a novel genre which had few established standards of analysis but still wanted to be taken seriously; and to the power the narrator holds over his implied reader so long as she has appetite. I locate this hermeneutic of appetite also in the plot of Tom's impulsive meanderings and other characters' assessment of Tom's appetites and their consequences. Ultimately, Fielding shows how Tom's happy ending is the result of him gratifying all of his desires, and of him pursuing his prosocial desires – to help others and to marry Sophia – most particularly. This, I show, represents a central principle of fruitful multiplication that is true not only in the premise of the marriage plot and in Tom's attainment of "wisdom," but also in

Fielding's narrative. At the end of a story propelled by the consequences of characters having only limited information and becoming separated from each other, all the while the narrator lords his superior knowledge over his implied reader, the conclusion depicts how readers (both characters who interpret and the reader of their plot) might come together to form a community where their combined interpretation of events might be powerful enough to usurp the narrator. However, there is also a shadow side to a hermeneutic of appetite, which this chapter explores through the key word "excrescence" – that is an unnatural outgrowth resulting from appetite – and is exemplified both in Blifil's character and in the digressions which constantly derail Tom's journey. Excrescences are inevitable byproducts of the amoral impulses represented by appetite, which in turn suggests how a hermeneutic of appetite, as well as the interpretation of a novel more generally and *Tom Jones* in particular, should never be understood as resolving without complications.

The third and final chapter focuses on Jonathan Swift's scatological themes in order to explore the opposing premise to Fielding's hermeneutic of appetite: what happens when the read object might induce disgust rather than desire? The dross that fills Swift's imaginative universes consistently affects their viewers and readers – sometimes by eliciting deranged attention, like in "The Lady's Dressing Room," or sometimes by how the waste splatters on everyone who passes by, like in "A Description of a City Shower." Swift takes aim at the reader-critic with his excremental subjects, creating allegories of reading that show how no reader can emerge unbesmirched by the object of his inquiry. However, readers cannot simply ignore what they do not wish to see, either; Swift skewers characters trying to come out of the mess cleanly even more viciously than he does the original producers of the mess. In Swift, excremental matter consistently proves to be the impetus, test, and limit of close reading. Close reading resembles

Kristeva's description of abjection, and to a certain extent Freud's uncanny too. In "The Lady's Dressing Room," as Strephon reacts to Celia's excrescences with a combination of horror, interest, and attraction, he is unable to entirely separate himself from what he sees. However, it also contains a clue to a more productive way to read a fascinating yet repellent object, as Strephon sustains his reading of Celia by consistently aestheticizing her waste. This idea of creating something aesthetically worthwhile in the face of the repugnant is confirmed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's indignant response poem, "The Reasons That Induced Dr. S[wift] to write a Poem called 'The Lady's Dressing Room'," to a perceived resemblance between Celia and her. By creating a new poem that threatens to lay waste to Swift's, Montagu shows how creative reinterpretation is the most effective response to reading that which induces disgust.

These chapters' focus on appetitive, digestive, and excretory themes offer new interpretations of long-standing critical debates both in and about eighteenth-century British literature. The chapter on Pope considers his use of *imitatio* in the context of the Augustan debate about the relative merits of ancient and modern literature. On the one hand, Pope's sympathies clearly lie with the ancients, and his use of *imitatio* self-consciously constructs his own literary heritage within a classical lineage. On the other hand, my reading of *Peri Bathous* shows how increasingly mechanical understandings of the physical process of digestion, as well as the new commercial realities of the eighteenth-century book trade, affected Pope's use of the digestive metaphor for literary imitation. He modernized this long-standing trope in a way that makes space for the modern literature he denigrates. Then, by examining the role of appetite and the excrescent outgrowths it encourages in Fielding's novel *Tom Jones*, I show how the infamously condemned prefatory chapters are in fact part and parcel of the plot, just as the narrator and the hypothetical reader he addresses in these asides ultimately form a community of

interpreters that demote the importance of the omniscient narrator even while he is so conspicuous in this early novel. Finally, an examination of the femininity of waste in Swift suggests that the more typical question of whether Swift is misogynist or not offers fewer answers and suggestive interpretations than my alternative focus on the dynamics of misogyny portrayed in works like "The Lady's Dressing Room." These dynamics, resembling Kristeva's "abjection" and the Freudian uncanny, especially when read alongside Montagu's response poem, reveal how excrement consistently remains a strong impetus to close read, and that close reading provides the interpretive fecundity for a subsequent creative act. In total, these chapters explore the corporeal terms of digestion, appetite, and waste, and how they became laden with economic meaning as changing literary standards, incentives in the book trade, and a growing, middle-class reading public in eighteenth-century England prefigured modern notions of insatiable consumers and the waste they create within the context of a general economy.

In current scholarship of British scatological literature, there is a tendency to label the eighteenth century as a turning point from a Rabelaisian carnivalesque mode celebrating the world turned upside down with an ass at its head, to a more modern aesthetic of depressed anality, with Swift as the heir to Rochester.[10] However, I find this attempted historical narrative to be unidimensional at best, and misleading at worst, since there is evidence of both modes, although perhaps in different proportions, in all of the works I study here. Since the grimmer interpretations of a satirical scatology are already abundantly clear, I have instead focused on how waste is not merely the end, but also the beginning of a new interpretive cycle, and how focusing on such an unattractive subject as waste challenges modes of reading based on desire,

[10] This argument is consistent in both recent and earlier criticism. See Smith, *Between Two Stools*; Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*.

attraction, or positive appetite. The unresolved question of this dissertation is whether all the gaudy tulips I find in these authors' and artists' dung heaps always need to be reclaimed. As I find a fairly consistent re-motivation of waste into something more purposeful, there is an attendant irony, and perhaps some naïve idealism, in asking all waste to find a purpose, and to be redeemed. The first and most obvious problem with this position is that if waste becomes consistently useful, it ceases to be waste.

A second, perhaps less obvious, problem with this position is that it seems to enforce an order in which all elements must be proved to be useful, and where their value equates with the work they do. To resist this economic value system, it is helpful to recall older models of celebrating the lower bodily elements and the waste they produce, as well as the people who populate the lower-status roles in a community. In his study of Rabelais, Bakhtin describes the medieval carnival as a political tradition "of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear," and "comic crownings and uncrownings."[11] During these carnivals, the regular political order did not apply: "The carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized *in their own way*, the way of the people."[12] The central, organizing principle of the people organizing themselves "in their own way" is one of degradation, which Bakhtin describes as "not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one," in which "the body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecating."[13] For Bakhtin, waste and other excrescences can be read as evidence of the power of the lower strata (both bodily and socially), which degrade the whole even as they

[11] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 11.
[12] Bakhtin, 255.
[13] Bakhtin, 21, 26.

enable its growth. Likewise, the backdrop for each of my chapters, which I explore most explicitly in the chapter on Pope, is the growth of what these authors often declare to be an undesirable reading public of dubious taste and education (especially novel-loving women). Yet these troublesome readers also enable the growth of the book trade and the professionalization of writing by being regular, small-scale consumers of texts. The following chapters already consider how waste and other excesses are often in fact useful. By taking inspiration from the medieval carnivalesque mode, they also might reconsider (and invert) the role and value of that which these high-status male authors satirized.

The challenge of interpreting refuse is that so much meaning is already ascribed to it. One must strip away automatic assumptions of value (or lack thereof) in order to understand the dynamics that determine what is waste, what is useful, and why. As the subsequent chapters show, close reading is a powerful tool for reexamining that which is assumed to be waste, a lesson just as useful in a contemporary context of ecological campaigns seeking "Zero Waste" as in satirical eighteenth-century literature. Close reading keeps the complexity of satirical (and polluting) identifications in play, challenging any pure and simple interpretations. Rather than pathologizing waste in order to either isolate it or put it back to work, this dissertation and the questions it engenders begin to envision the coexistence of the useful and useless, productive and unproductive, purposeful and purposeless, joyful and dire. Together, these elements might form a plural community – like the community of readers which emerges from *Tom Jones* – whose relationships are not simply reciprocal and zero-sum, but where the combined perspective of multiple points of view creates a richer and more intimate portrait of an object or character than what even the best single narrator could offer. In this way, waste might still be allowed to be

waste: freed from purposiveness and permitted to have an ending. At the same time, the fact of it being waste in one narrative does not prohibit it from having meaning and use in another.

The Fake Rhetoric Manual and the Duck's Unoriginal Scats: The Case of Imitation and Pope's Digestive Rhetoric

> It hath been long (my dear Countrymen) the subject of my Concern and Surprize, that whereas numberless Poets, Criticks, and Orators have compiled and digested the Art of *Ancient Poesie*, there hath not arisen among us one Person so publick spirited, as to perform the like for the *Modern*. Altho' it is universally known, that our every-way-industrious Moderns, both in the Weight of their *Writings*, and in the Velocity of their *Judgments*, do so infinitely excel the said Ancients.[14]

A metaphorical digestion of literature preoccupies Pope's mock-rhetoric manual, *Peri Bathous* (1727/8), from the start. Juxtaposed against "compiling," that is, merely sorting and adding together, digestion implies that the "Poets, Criticks, and Orators," a creative class, have incorporated the content and forms of ancient poetry into something of their own. However, a distillation of an original, creative product into a mere manual of instruction already sounds like an absurdity, and that creative reworking is further suspect when it is named digestion, since the end result, naturally, is excretory. Yet at least this digestion is the result of the subject matter being delicious, evidenced by the "numberless" voracious readers. On the other hand, no one is "publick spirited" enough to do the same for the presumably blander modern literature, the dubious merits of which the narrator identifies as heavy, ponderous writing and suspiciously quick judgments.

[14] Williams, *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, 389. All references to works by Pope discussed in this paper come from this edition. Subsequent parenthetical references will refer to line, chapter, and/or page numbers, as appropriate.

The weight and velocity in which the moderns "excel" recall Newton's laws of gravity (published only four decades before *Peri Bathous*, in 1687) and are echoed in Pope's playful use of key terms containing internal contradictions. "Bathous" in the title can mean equally a height or a depth, and his frequent exploitation of the term "profund" to recall those depths also heightens our awareness of the lack of any metaphorical intellectual heights – it is not quite profound. Whether it is public spirited to offer up the results of one's digestion is another matter, left unanswered. However, the logic of the gross, physical metaphor should be clear enough for any reader, especially anyone familiar with the "sheer fecal fun" of the dunces in honor of their goddess, Dulness, in the *Dunciad* (1729 – 1743). This opening gambit thus transitions the standard, if fierce, Augustan debate about the relative merits of classical versus modern literature into a broader critique of the value of "digesting" literature at all. As Pope puts in his *An Essay on Criticism*, "Regard not then if Wit be *Old* or *New*, / But blame the *False*, and value still the *True*" (ll. 406 – 407). Much seems to depend on the quality of the original, consumed matter and the body that transforms it, whether it will be well-incorporated or simply turned into refuse. For Pope, the ability to revitalize the Art of *Ancient Poesie* into a relevant, contemporary literature seems to come down to this bodily metaphor of digestion, to which his satirical dunce of a character-narrator, Martinus Scriblerus, returns repeatedly and playfully, essentially reenacting that *Dunciad* scene.

So, all the while Scriblerus frolics in mud of his own making, Pope seems to embark on something more serious in *Peri Bathous*. This is confirmed by Pope's own suggestion, as reported by John Spence, that "the Profound," referring to *Peri Bathous*, "though written in so

ludicrous a way, may be very well worth reading seriously, as an art of rhetoric."[15] However, reinterpreting *Peri Bathous* from an ironic rhetoric manual into a serious one requires more than simply reversing all of Scriblerus's precepts, and this is where the digestive metaphor once again becomes handy to understand the dynamics at work. This chapter presents a sustained analysis of that digestive metaphor in Pope's *Peri Bathous* and how it can help us to understand its implicit rhetorical education and the importance of the example of his "translation" of an older English poet, John Donne. In it, Pope honors his literary heritage while also processing and incorporating it into his own contemporary literary context, allowing him to reincorporate the "antient" into a "modern" text.

While the interpretation of literary fecal matter is unambiguous in Pope – in *The Dunciad* it not only implicates the dunce who produced it but also besmatters everyone in its vicinity – the literary digestive process itself is more complex to interpret. It is clearly a central idea in *Peri Bathous*. For one, Pope's preferred synonym for bathos is "profund," which comes from the Latin *profunderes*, meaning to pour out, to lavish, to squander (*OED*). It is one letter short of "profound," a word Pope also uses to translate *bathos*, but less frequently. We can count this difference as important, even in an age before standardized spellings, since Pope's finely tuned ear and love of perfect rhymes would have noticed that it produces a different vowel sound. Pro*fund* suggests that the depth Pope invokes in *Peri Bathous* is tied etymologically to that which is fundament-al, and – stretching the wordplay a bit further – that the repeated digestive and excremental metaphors are in fact relevant to his point. This is confirmed by the frequency in which they appear, such as in chapter three: "The Necessity of the *Bathos*, Physically

[15] Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from Conversation*, 1:57. Anecdote 138, said by Pope in 1736. Thanks to Fredric Bogel for sending me – and interpreting – this anecdote.

consider'd," which describes the physical necessity of a "Poetical Evacuation," or his figure of the physician who analyzes his patient's feces in chapter seven, and the poets' dunghills in chapter nine, to name just a few. In *Peri Bathous*, just as in the rest of his work, digestion and the excrement it produces are, if not Pope's central metaphor, then at least a metaphor whose repetition is both notable and too often ignored, and any of the very limited critical attention to scatological subjects in Pope has so far been confined to the *Dunciad*.[16] In *Peri Bathous*, the relationship of digestion to Pope's satirical rhetorical education suggests on the one hand a mechanical, rote operation which even the greatest dunce or lowliest hack writer may be able to reproduce ad nauseam. On the other hand, digestive rhetoric is simultaneously a sign of vitality. Through it, Pope signals that digestive rhetoric can also be understood as a living metabolism, which can revitalize older pieces of literature by reincorporating them into a more modern context. Thus, digestion is an ambiguous metaphor in Pope; just like its physical counterpart, it produces energy as well as waste.

A note on terms: I am using the term *digestion* as a catchall to describe a process that invisibly and irreversibly changes and lays waste to an original object. This description is deliberately mechanistic, as I will explain later in this chapter. Pope usually spends more time referring back to the original object and its transformation rather than the specifics of the waste itself, for instance Corinna's last "evening's cates" in *The Dunciad*. As Pope puts it, "food

[16] Waste and the digestive metaphor has not been ignored by critics entirely, but it has certainly been discussed less than one would think, given its prevalence in literature of all periods. In an eighteenth-century context, critical interpretation of these themes is almost always limited to a discussion of Swift's works. Peter Smith describes scatological subjects as being "if not outside, then at least at the margins of traditional scholarly discussion." His book provides a survey of scatological literature from Chaucer to Swift, but omits Pope. (Smith, *Between Two Stools*, x.) Sophie Gee wrote a whole book on waste in the eighteenth-century but does not write on Pope in (Gee, *Making Waste*.) Laura Brown writes a fascinating history of sewers in the eighteenth century Britain and its literature, mentioning the *Dunciad* in (Brown, *Fables of Modernity*.) Fredric Bogel also touches on "fecal fun" in the *Dunciad* (Bogel, "Dulness Unbound," 844.)

digested takes another name," and it is this description of how an original object must and does take another name that I think is particularly interesting in understanding Pope's art of rhetoric, and the seriousness underlying its satire. This is not just bathroom humor. While I am using it in this broader sense as a shorthand for a larger, metaphorical logic I see at work in *Peri Bathous,* Pope uses the word a fair bit too. He speaks of *digestion* in a few places throughout the corpus of his work, usually clearly referencing the bodily process, although there are some instances where the word is used in its chemical sense, or its close cousin, *fermentation*, when the original object goes through a carefully controlled process that transforms its character and preserves it, under circumstances which would ordinarily produce rot. Processes like digestion and fermentation threaten to produce waste at the same time that they irreversibly transform the original object into something useful – producing energy in a body and better, more interesting food. As these chemical processes imply, the rhetorical process whereby food "takes another name" in Pope should be understood likewise as a transformative event where the stakes are high for the future of the original object. If these processes are any indication, the original object will be changed irreversibly – but it may also be preserved. It is also worth noting that Pope's description of rhetoric as digestion fits with classical metaphors for understanding rhetoric. It takes Plato's critique of rhetoric as mere cookery to its next, logical step – although it emphasizes consumption rather than production, which reflects Pope's contemporary context and concerns about an eighteenth-century literary marketplace where sheer quantity was being incentivized and rewarded over quality – but more on this later.

IMITATION, DIGESTION, AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF ORIGINAL WORDS

Pope plays with waste and digestion tropes in several of his works, most famously the second book of the *Dunciad*, and there are some consistencies in how he uses them. For example, excrement is always a satirical object that indicates hack writers – and their editors – nearby. However, there are also some important differences. *Peri Bathous* stresses the transformative effort associated with creating waste, while in the *Dunciad*, waste tends to represent the end of the original object as a *fait accompli*, such as in "How Prologues into Prefaces decay, / And these to Notes are fritter'd quite away" (ll. 277 – 278). Pope traces the evolution of the written word from prologue, to preface, to note – each step representing a shorter, more synthesizing paratext, presumably distracting if not entirely supplanting reading the main text. Decaying and frittering away are processes which contribute nothing as they lay waste, eventually eroding completely. However, it is clear that Pope doesn't expect language and literature to remain stagnant, even if the resulting change is problematic or subpar. That said, according to Pope, there are better – and worse – ways to effect that change, and imitation and its resemblance to digestion seems to be at the crux of the problem.

When Pope uses the digestive metaphor, he is following a long tradition described by Gasparino Barzizza (died 1431), who in an educational manual, *De Imitatione*, listed "five standard metaphors for imitation: apian, digestive, filial, echoic, choral," stressing the longevity of the first two in particular.[17] Greene also analyzes a more famous example in use comes from slightly earlier, from Petrarch,

> I have read Virgil, Horace, Livy, Cicero, not once but a thousand times, not hastily but in repose, and I have pondered them with all the powers of my mind. I ate in the morning what I would digest in the evening; I swallowed as a boy what

[17] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 147.

> I would ruminate upon as a man. These writings I have so thoroughly absorbed and fixed, not only in my memory but in my very marrow, these have become so much a part of myself, that even though I should never read them again they would cling in my spirit, deep-rooted in its inmost recesses. [*Fam*. 22.2][18]

Greene traces the digestive metaphor "back to Seneca as well as forward at least to Francis Bacon" – a genealogy cut off much too soon given how extensively Pope uses it. Petrarch uses the digestive metaphor to identify the books that nourished him intellectually over such a long period that they became incorporated into the fabric of his mind. This is a model of *imitatio* as a complex, rather than pedantic, rhetorical practice: his literary models became a part of himself, not just as a writer, but to his soul and sense of self. He imbibed his literary models until they were a part of himself: he became what he ate. Francis Bacon says much the same thing, differently: "Some *Bookes* are to be Tasted, Others to be Swallowed, and Some Few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with Diligence and Attention."[19] For Bacon, to be chewed and digested is the fate of only the best books. Just because a work is consumed and digested does not make it great – and this is the problem that Pope sees plaguing readers and writers of his own age. Pope thus repeats a well-worn trope, yet his use of it is novel in how he literalizes it with gross material details over large sections of his writing, following a bodily logic. Whereas Petrarch shifts easily between apian, digestive, and paternal metaphors, moving between them as best suits his needs, Pope's satirical narrator seems not to be able to help

[18] Greene, 99.
[19] Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, 153. Interestingly, the opening sentence to this essay describes "studies" almost exactly as rhetoric would be described: "*Studies* serve for Delight, for Ornament, and for Ability," as rhetoric was increasingly identified with literary ornamentation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

himself but keeps returning to the mud. Digestion is a recurrent theme, and the waste usually gets all the attention, but there are important themes of incorporation as well.

A repeated joke in the *Dunciad* is to excuse the breach of decorum of introducing excremental objects by explaining that the scenes are only verbatim modern English translations of classical sources. For instance, Pope's note to the scene in which Curl falls into Corinna's lake of effluence asserts, "Though this incident may seem too low and base for the dignity of an Epic poem, the learned very well know it to be but a copy of Homer and Virgil," only conceding, "though our poet (in compliance to modern nicety) has remarkably enriched and coloured his language, as well as raised the versification, in this Episode, and in the following one of Eliza." (Note 75 to II.75, p 324). And in the preface, narrator Martin Scriblerus explains of the *Dunciad,*

> As it beareth the name of *Epic*, it is thereby subjected to such severe indispensable rules as are laid on all Neoterics, a strict imitation of the Ancients; insomuch that any deviation, accompanied with whatever poetic beauties, hath always been censured by the sound critic. How exact that Imitation hath been in this piece, appeareth not only by its general structure, but by the particular allusions infinite, many whereof have escaped both the commentator and poet himself; yea divers by his exceeding diligence are so altered and interwoven with the rest, that several have already been, and more will be, by the ignorant abused, as altogether and originally his own. (Martin Scriblerus, "Of the Poem," *The Dunciad*, p. 306)

The crux of the joke – and a key point in Pope's faux writing manual – is the difference between the notion of a strict imitation or mere copy of an original literary object and the rhetorical concept of imitation, taken from the Latin *imitatio*, which is in turn a translation of the Greek

term, *mimesis*. In an examination of the contours of the rabbit hole containing important examples and literary scholarship on *imitatio*, *imitation*, and to an extent *mimesis*, perhaps the most economical description of the literary concept comes from M.H. Abrams, who divides *imitation* into two "frequent but diverse applications: (1) to define the nature of literature and the other arts, and (2) to indicate the relation of one literary work to another literary work which served as its model."[20] Helpfully, Abrams goes on to use Pope as an example of "a specialized use of the term in this second sense," in which imitation "describes a literary work which deliberately echoed an older work but adapted it to subject matter in the writer's own age, usually in a satirical fashion." Pope's license with the original text in his imitations is a key point, and one which has been analyzed through the analogy of misleading mirrors by one critic, perhaps drawing from Swift in *The Battel of the Books*, "Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders generally discover everybody's face but their own." Melinda Rabb describes Pope's imitations as a "'full imaginative remaking' of an original that yet "owes its existence to, reflects that original.… With the mirror of imitation, Pope can make himself both a presence and an absence in the poem."[21] Yet if we expect a mirror of the original in Pope's imitations, even a distorted one, we are going to be disappointed, and what's more, analyzing for similarities threatens to reduce his imitations into something bordering on plagiarisms. If instead we take Pope's repeated digestive metaphor seriously, we can begin to understand how he used imitation not as a reflection but as a mode of incorporation which revivified the classics while simultaneously positioning himself in an illustrious literary lineage.[22]

---

[20] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 131. While it's the original Greek term that gave us the others, *mimesis* is used somewhat differently from *imitatio* and imitation. Howell argues that Aritstotle's concept of mimesis is closest to what we now call a "symbol." Howell, *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic*, 31.
[21] Rabb, "House Of Mirrors: Imitations of Horace," 122–23.
[22] Seth Rudy says much the same thing in more life-and-death terms: Pope "takes a much simpler and simultaneously far more ambitious route to securing his place in the future alongside the venerable ancients. Rather

Pope imitates in both of Abrams' senses, but when he mocks the exact copies that the dunce poets make, he is clearly speaking to the second meaning of the word: the relationship between the new text and its past model. In the two quotations above, Pope both ridicules the notion of making an exact copy of an older work – mere plagiarism – and imitating with "remarkably enriched and coloured" language. The descriptions of the authors' so-called "improvements" seem little more than slapping on a fresh coat of paint, making a new collage of the old pieces, or just being confusing enough that no one can make heads or tails of the original elements being imitated – the author included. "Exceeding diligence," albeit a worthy attribute in many other contexts, is of limited value in creative writing. Where is the middle ground? It certainly isn't in Scriblerus' alert to the reader that he has mimicked the structure of an epic. His claim that there are "particular allusions infinite" that may escape the reader suggests that the similarities never existed in the first place, or alternately that the reader and critic aren't clever or educated enough to understand the "allusions infinite" if even if they did exist.

Abrams notes that a large part of the effect of this kind of imitation comes from the reader being able to recognize the "resourcefulness and wit with which Pope accommodated to contemporary circumstances the structure, details, and even the wording of one or another of Horace's Roman satires."[23] Pope's kind of imitation requires a degree of complicity with his reader – a reader who understands enough of the original source to appreciate his variation on it. Thus, "*Imitatio* was a literary technique that was also a pedagogic method and a critical battleground; it contained implications for the theory of style, the philosophy of history, and for

than writing self-consciously ephemeral and external defenses of the hallowed dead, he seeks to resurrect them within himself and his work." Rudy, "Pope, Swift, and the Poetics of Posterity," 4.

[23] Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 132.

conceptions of the self."[24] Imitation necessitated and self-consciously referred to the literary education of both the author and reader, making the past present in that recollection. As Phillips notes, "it is often just those instances of variation from the original, and the nature of the variation that indicate the significance of the work to the imitator's 'skilful Reader'."[25] However, imitations, like translations, should also work even when a reader has no prior knowledge of the original text – and therein lies the rub. Imitations must simultaneously capture the style of the original while also being distinctive enough to be able to stand on its own.

The distance between a mere copy and literary imitation is similar to the dynamic that exists in any good translation, which in order to effectively convey the original's true meaning in a different language, sometimes has to deviate from the literal meaning of the original text to accommodate differences in idioms. Pope does that when he translates Homer's *Iliad* from the original Greek, and as he notes in his preface to the translation, "no literal Translation can be just to an excellent Original in a superior Language" (452). The idea that there can be a superior language already suggests that ideas do not transfer through literal meaning alone, but also through more tenuous literary considerations like grammar, syntax, and context, which must be chosen based on the effect they will have on their reader's emotions and understanding – the work of rhetoric, broadly understood.[26] In his preface, Pope claims that "[i]t is the first grand

[24] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 2.
[25] Phillips, "The Composition of Pope's Imitation of Horace, Satire II, I," 174.
[26] My reader might be noticing a conflation between rhetoric and poetics, which reflects how Pope conflates them in calling *Peri Bathous* an art of rhetoric when his explicit project is a lesson in how to write poetry. Howell argues that in the early eighteenth century, "boundaries securely established by ancient critics were being obscured and imperfectly remembered, and confused notions of the interrelations of rhetoric and poetics were in the process of becoming the rule rather than the exception in critical circles." Howell, *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic*, 24. However, this is a controversial view, and there is good reason to believe that the way Pope conflates the two is intentional. Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, combines with poetics in *Peri Bathous* to show that the stakes are high when promulgating the bathos in an increasingly efficient literary marketplace, with so many potential readers. His "rhetorical chest of drawers," discussed later in this chapter, is acknowledged to be a dangerous tool in the hands of the wrong person.

Duty of an Interpreter to give his Author entire and unmaim'd; and for the rest, the *Diction* and *Versification* only are his proper Province; since these must be his own, but the others he is to take as he finds them" (452). This description of the translator's work being merely diction and versification makes it sound mechanical, since those tasks can be boiled down to counting the number of metrical feet in a line, lines per stanza, and occasionally matching a rhyme. However, Pope's idea of "entire and unmaimed" is quite different from most other people's – "[h]is effort to maintain Homer's permanence ironically came at the cost of changing his poems in order to align classical epic values" with the values of his own age. "As a result, several critics point out, Pope's Homer contained at least as much of the former as the latter, if not more. Richard Bentley famously, and perhaps apocryphally, objected to Pope's calling it Homer at all."[27] It is clear that Pope has a broader conception of the power and scope of diction and versification – done correctly – and that its effects are more in line with the broader scope of "interpreting" rather than literally conveying the original into a new language.[28]

Imitation and translation were roughly equivalent terms in the early eighteenth century, after the debate about free translation begun in the 1650s, in which classical names, places, and works were modernized "to make classical poems more readily comprehensible, and general latitude in rendering." Free translation aimed to avoid "excessive literalism" and they eventually became called "imitations."[29] If Pope differentiated the tasks of translation and imitation in a meaningful way, and it's not clear that he did, he probably held translation in lower esteem than

[27] Rudy, "Pope, Swift, and the Poetics of Posterity," 5.
[28] The caveat of correctness refers to the Augustan concept of "'correctness,' "which, distinguished from greatness or 'genius,' sometimes took the form of an ideal, as in the well known advice of Walsh to Pope: that there had been *great* English poets, but no great poet who was *correct*." Wimsatt describes its application, insofar as Pope might have followed Walsh's advice, as "meaning something like symmetry and something like restraint and precision." Wimsatt, Jr., "Rhetoric and Poems," 17.
[29] Stack, *Pope and Horace*, 19.

imitation.[30] In an unidentified quotation from Pope found in Aubrey Williams' introduction, he describes himself during the "relatively tranquil" years of 1720 to 1725 as having "become, by due gradation of dullness, from a poet to translator, and from a translator, a mere editor," a remark that helps us understand Pope's own conception of the relationship between creative poetic production and translation (xvi). However, the facetiousness of his tone, not to mention our knowledge that he was working on his celebrated translations of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* during those years, indicate that he did not draw a firm line between the task of writing poetry and the perhaps duller and more pedantic tasks of imitating and translating. This is further confirmed in how Pope entitled so many of his own works translations, imitations, and also paraphrases ("*The Second Satire of the Second Book of Horace Paraphrased"*), and versifications ("Satires and Epistles of Horace Imitated, With Satires of Dr *Donne* Versifyed"). While many of these works are satires, not all of them are, for instance "Messiah: A Sacred Eclogue *in Imitation* of Virgil's Pollio." All of this signals the importance Pope places on rhetorical training and the effect of imitation and versification, which might be because it translates across time, makes a work vibrant in a contemporary context, and trains a writer in the process – perhaps an even more difficult task than translating between languages.

[30] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 51. "A series of distinctions made by humanist schoolmasters and scholars is of lesser interest to the modern reader: this is the series *translation, paraphrasis, imitatio, allusion*, which tries to draw boundary lines as the version of the original becomes increasingly free. … Once removed from the classroom, divisions between the four principal categories are likely to seem arbitrary; parts of many imitations might well be regarded as translations, while most Renaissance 'translations' are already interpretations."
"Dryden distinguished three degrees of translation: *metaphrase* (following an author 'word by word, and line by line'), *paraphrase* (which strives to render the sense rather than every word), and *imitation* ('where the translator [if now he has not lost that name] assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original, to run division on the groundwork, as he pleases')." Later Dryden makes a confession that may imply "that his original distinctions were too rigid to be of value, found in Dryden's "Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles," in *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1900), 1:237 – 43

At the start of the *Peri Bathous* chapter, "Of Imitation, and the manner of Imitating," success seems to come from the quality of materials used for a writer's literary education and the ensuing lineage he can claim from those authors he imitates. Referring to Defoe as "the Poetical Son of *Withers*," who was originally speared in the *Dunciad*, is surely not meant as a compliment. Translation returns as an important subset to imitation, as the ability to translate from classical sources is emphasized in a parenthetical aside to the reader – "I beg pardon of the gentle *English* Reader, and such of our Writers as understand not *Latin*" – who cannot understand the original passage in the *Aeneid* and so must settle for the wayward imitation of a "*British* Poet," who compares a volcano's eruption to the effects of a violent stomach bug (408). The British poet's lack of talent is implicitly the source of the infection. However, it becomes clear that the problem is not necessarily being monolingual, and there is less snobbery in Pope's implied standards of imitation than one might think from this beginning. After all, he points to how Virgil was able to learn by imitating another Latin poet, *Ennius*, and Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden are listed as worthy examples in English. The true sins against imitation, he reveals later in the chapter he divides into "two Sorts; the First is when we force to our own Purposes the Thoughts of others; the Second consists in copying the Imperfections, or Blemishes of celebrated Authors" (408). The "melted Bowels" of Mount Etna fit into the first category. Examples of the second category include a line of a play purportedly written in the style of Shakespeare by Pope's contemporary, Nicholas Rowe, and "sundry poems" written in a pedantic and stilted manner. Both imitate only the locally and historically specific parts of Shakespeare and Milton's style, which Scriblerus a bit harshly calls the imperfections and blemishes, as opposed to that which has more lasting literary merit.

As the gastrointestinal theme continues in Scriblerus' description of imitation, it seems that good and bad writing are such inherently different things that imitation might not be an effective education unless a writer already possesses what it takes, which here is described as that symbol of everlasting value, "gold."

> As *Virgil* is said to have read *Ennius*, out of his Dunghill to draw Gold; so may our Author read *Shakespear, Milton,* and *Dryden*, for the contrary End, to bury their Gold in his own Dunghill. A true Genius, when he find any thing lofty or shining in them, will have the Skill to bring it down, take off the Gloss, or quite discharge the Colour, by some ingenious Circumstance, or Periphrase, some Addition, or Diminution, or by some of those Figures the use of which we shall shew in our next Chapter. (407)

Imitation here recalls the digestive process, and not just because of the repeated references to dung. There is also the "discharge" of color and the description of the transformational effects dull writers can wreak on even a literary masterpiece. However, the original text of gold is never fully assimilated into the dunghill. Their material compositions are too unlike for one to fully decompose into the other – one organic, the other inorganic. The dunghill, however, can change the gold by altering its exterior character – the gloss, color, and stature (by bringing it down). The degrading processes Scriblerus advises are devising "ingenious" circumstances, paraphrasing while either adding or losing something of the original, or by using tropes or figures, as described in the next chapter. In it, he names some of those figures as catachresis, metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, puns, and jargon, among others, each time highlighting how the figure can be manipulated into its worst possible effect.

In this scatological analogy, the kind of imitation *Peri Bathous* endorses consists of altering the exterior of the original object beyond recognition, whether by dismantling or building onto it until it becomes a monstrosity. Imitation almost seems to have a chemical effect when it "take[s] off the Gloss," and "discharge[s] the Colour" such that gold begins to resemble dung, and may be falsely identified as such.[31] However, some hope for the continuation of good literature remains, despite the best efforts of terrible imitators, because in this description gold is ever present. There is the possibility of a cyclical history in the original description of the gold being found in a dunghill and then buried in a dunghill – it might be found in that dunghill yet again and therefore what is good in literature may not be lost forever. That said, the "gold" in literature also seems coldly fixed and inhumane, particularly in contrast to the all-too-human (or animal) dunghill. Can an author hope to write – or even refashion – a gold nugget of his own, or is that gold the thing that is eternal and immortal in literature, and all an author can hope is to be able to have a few buried in his own inevitable dunghill? These are some of the more fundamental questions that emerge from this first description of the rhetorical study and practice of imitation.

While it is not always easy to derive positive precepts from satire, there is a certain aptness to imitatio being discussed in a satirical manual on rhetoric by the Augustan period's foremost poet. In his book on satire, Fredric Bogel argues, "Augustan satire is better understood as a literary mechanism for the production of differences in the face of anxiety about replication, identity, sameness, and undifferentiation."[32] Imitation, especially the way that Pope practices it (so that each poem has autonomy from its original), can also be understood as a literary

[31] Thanks to Professor Neil Saccamano for suggesting this reading.
[32] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 21.

mechanism for producing differences in the face of anxiety about replication, identity, and sameness. The anxiety about sameness and replication is not necessarily about the possibility that imitation is too similar to the original, but that the literary marketplace is overcrowded with unoriginal knockoffs of better poems and prose than they can ever pretend to be. The key issue in regard to imitation is how to create enough difference without losing what made the original great and worthy of imitation in the first place. This is a large part of what Pope addresses in *Peri Bathous*, and the mock-rhetoric instruction that it represents. What better way to address how to create that difference than through the literary form that creates difference?

This discussion of imitation so far has focused on how it functions as a rhetorical education, but Pope produced imitations well past his early years as a writer. Meanwhile, we have skipped over the question of whether there is any real need for updates to the classics, which, so long as there is no need for a real translation, should be by definition good enough to hold up over the years. Pope answers these questions most explicitly in *An Essay on Criticism*, written early in his career, and a manifesto of sorts for the young writer. In it, he has some similar observations to what he will later say more satirically in *Peri Bathous*, for instance:

> The *Vulgar* thus through *Imitation* err;
>
> As oft the *Learn'd* by being *Singular*; (ll. 424 – 425)

In this couplet it is less knowledge itself than self-knowledge that is emphasized – if you're well-educated, don't try to reinvent the wheel. And if you're not, don't try to pretend that you are. In its doubly negative outcome, regardless of the type of author, it also speaks to the inevitability of most literary attempts being pure dross: "In practice [imitatio] led not infrequently to sterility. It led also, if less frequently, to a series of masterpieces."[33] Pope repeatedly stressed the existence

[33] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 2.

of rules of nature for writing, in other words, *mimesis*, or the concept of how art should ideally imitate nature.

> But *Critic Learning* flourish'd most in *France.*
>
> The *Rules*, a Nation born to serve, obeys,
>
> And *Boileau* still in Right of *Horace* sways.
>
> But *we*, brave *Britons, Foreign Laws* despis'd,
>
> And kept *unconquer'd*, and *unciviliz'd*,
>
> Fierce for the *Liberties of Wit, and* bold,
>
> We still defy'd the *Romans*, as *of old*.
>
> Yet *some* there were, among the *sounder Few*
>
> Of those who *less presum'd* and *better knew*,
>
> Who durst assert the *juster Ancient Cause*,
>
> And here *restor'd* Wit's *Fundamental Laws*
>
> Such was the Muse, whose Rules and Practice tell,
>
> *Nature's chief Master-piece is writing well*." (ll. 712 – 724)

This passage is deliberately tricky, testing the reader's own allegiances before giving away Pope's. The first reference to the French predictably degenerates into a taunt: they know and follow the rules but only because they are a "Nation born to serve." Yet the typical corollary that the Brits are brave, unconquered, and "Fierce for the Liberties of Wit" is also undermined. Not only are they uncivilized, they are also contrasted against "the sounder Few" who by presuming less, knew more. Pope describes these folks as asserting "the juster Ancient Cause" of "Wit's Fundamental Laws" – not the Roman laws he emphasizes, but one step further back: the Greeks,

and specifically Homer whose works Pope lauded as embodying the mimetic ideal of being a copy of nature itself.

Yet despite the evidence of Homer's endurance and a firm belief in the immortality of topnotch literature, Pope reveals a concern about translating the classics and "versifying" an English poet who hailed from the far less distant past, about a century before Pope:

> Our Sons their Fathers' *failing Language* see,
>
> And such as *Chaucer* is, shall *Dryden* be. (Essay on Critcism, ll. 482 – 483)

Pope stresses the quick pace of a hyperbolically "failing Language," describing how its effects are felt in a single generation: the sons no longer speak the language of their fathers. He predicts that the poetry of Dryden, who was still writing in Pope's lifetime, will soon be as remote as Chaucer's. For a poet so steeped in the classical tradition, Pope displays a great pride in the English tradition, as did Dryden, who briefly held the post of poet laureate and wrote the wonderfully acerbic and searing original takedown of dunce writers with scatological themes in *Mac Flecknoe*, and Chaucer, who wrote in Middle English at a time when French and Latin were the languages of the court and the university, respectively. Pope positions himself as the heir to this lineage, and, as evidenced by the number of translations, imitations, and versifications in his corpus, spends much of his time ensuring that great works of literature remain available in modern English. In his own writing, Pope delights in the possibilities contained in the English language not only with his famously clever rhymes, repeated and playful use of the caesura – which was a hallmark of Latin, Old English and Middle English poetry – such as when he describes the action of the fateful scissors in *The Rape of the Lock*,[34] and, as Aubrey Williams

[34] "The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring *Forfex* wide, / T'inclose the Lock; no joins it, to divide." (ll. 147 -148) As Fredric Bogel explained much more eloquently in this reading he gave while teaching the graduate course, "Satire,

demonstrates in a wonderful reading of the "intestine war" in "The Second Satire of the Second Book of Horace Paraphrased," the onomatopoeic possibilities in a language filled with so many Germanic explosive consonants (xxvii).[35] Pope uses all of his literary tools to enact a greater mimesis between his subject and the – English – words on the page.

Of course, problems exist in this grand project to save old works of literature and mitigate the effects of an evolving language. The untranslatable always exists, and there is the sense that imitations were also how "the classics were domesticated, *apprivoisés*. The superb formal imitations of Pope, Swift, and Doctor Johnson adjust the idiom of familiars who have lost their numinous ghostliness."[36] This so-called domestication of the classics took place not only through the always-controversial vernacularization of the classics, but also through Pope's interpretations of classical genres. Take, for example, his mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock*, which takes place entirely in a home and describes such mundanities as a lady's toilette with eagerness and detail. Yet these translations were also the basis for an increasing democratization of the literary sphere: "English could then become the means to empower women, as gendered subjects customarily denied a classical education" to "write and publish as well as read, to produce as well as consume culture." Neil Saccamano argues, "in the historical self-understanding of enlightened moderns, traditional literary authority is displaced by public printing as the man – but especially the woman – of reading and critic-rational judgment gains admission to the ranks of the lettered."[37] Complaints about the domestication of English literature, with its implications of timidity and limited experience, thus are tinged by cultural politics.

Sensibility, Imitation, and Mechanism in Eighteenth-Century Literature" (Spring 2013), the caesura splits the line in the middle, like the two blades from the pivot point in the scissors he describes.

[35] Williams, *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, xxvii.

[36] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 293.

[37] Saccamano, "Promises, Pillories, Pirates: Defoe's Speculations in Print." Thanks to Professor Saccamano for allowing me to read and quote a section of this unpublished essay.

Pope's relationship to the debate is complex as he participates in these linguistic and literary "domestications" at the same time that he derides the increasing number of wannabe writers as well as female readers in "To Augustus": "Sons, Sirs, and Grandsires, all will wear the Bays, / Our Wives read Milton, our Daughters Plays" (ll. 171 – 72). I will not speculate on Pope's cultural politics here, but I will note that with *The Rape of the Lock*, he was writing plots appropriate to his time. Pope did not live in a time of epic war but of battlefields of wit over tea, and he thus can be thought of as adhering to the mimetic principle of portraying the world as it is while also performing the imitatio that places him in a stylistic lineage of the epic poets of the past. Living in a different time, speaking a different language, Pope's imitations of Greek and Latin poets must necessarily be quite different from the original in order to succeed – that is the paradox. As Nancy Streuver puts it, "Rhetorical *imitatio*, with its concept of virtuosity as both a command of past techniques which possess continuous sanctions and a sensitivity to the unique demands of the present situation, provides a model of continuity in change."[38] That said, it's much easier to see continuity in change in retrospect rather than as you attempt to perform it, which is why it should be no surprise that we see Pope not only express anxiety in his writing about how to integrate the past into the present, but also dedicate so much of his career – and not only his early educational period – to the practice of *imitatio*.

According to Aubrey Williams, Pope's imitations of Horace fall "somewhere between translation and original creation," and ultimately "seem to be poems in their own right and to have their own autonomy" (xix). While Williams is clearly complimenting Pope's skill, his description points to the problematic logical outcome of Pope's comparison of imitation gone awry as a kind of digestion. The only autonomous object that results from a literary kind of

[38] Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance*, 193. As quoted in Greene, *The Light of Troy*, 32.

digestion besmatters the dunce poets. Pope seems to be depicting this literalized outcome of imitation-as-digestion in puddles and lakes of excrement in which the dunces frolic in *The Dunciad*. This outcome of a digestive imitation seems to be unambiguously gross, but I think it is only depicting one side of digestive imitation. Not for the last time, excrement's dual etymology seems relevant to understanding the doubleness at play. Bogel calls it "a profoundly divided word," deriving on the one hand from the Latin for growing out (*ex* + *crescere*), and sifting of separating out (*ex* + *cenere*) on the other.[39] Likewise, the product of imitation needs to grow out of while also separating from the original literary object. As it happens, that dynamic not only describes the relationship of excrement to the body, but also the model of digestive reading described by Petrarch and Bacon. While Pope does not have an explicit quip about ingesting the classics, it is implicit throughout his work. As Bogel describes a conclusion from *An Essay on Criticism*, "Tradition, then, is not something you copy but something you strive to internalize so that it can question you from within."[40] Wimsatt also describes it in Pope's work as "the rhetorical sinews of the kind of verse in which he was the champion – the essential patterns where Waller's strength and Denhams's sweetness joined, where Dryden had achieved the long resounding march and energy divine – these perhaps had been learned so well by Pope as a boy that he could forget them."[41] Internalizing tradition, where it is then subject to transformation by one's own intellectual process, only then producing an imitation is the other, more productive, side of the digestive imitation model and one that Pope clearly subscribes to as well, even though it creates less of a splash on the page.

[39] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 114.
[40] Bogel, 219.
[41] Wimsatt, Jr., "Rhetoric and Poems," 18.

DIGESTION'S SERIOUS AND LITERAL SIDE

What's notable about Pope's use of the digestion metaphor is how he adapts it to signify not just an ideal of incorporation and transformation of past sources for *imitatio*, but also uses it to critique the literary culture of his day. In order to do so, he goes into greater literal detail than predecessors like Petrarch and Bacon. Interpreting Pope's digestive metaphor at its literal face-value might seem inadvisable given his ironic treatment of writers who ponderously focus on material details rather than rising to more sublime considerations and requires some interpretive self-reflection. Take, for instance, Scriblerus's "first Rule" of metaphor: "to draw it from the lowest things, which is a certain way to sink the highest," and "that whenever you *start* a Metaphor, you must be sure to *Run it down,* and pursue it as far as it can go" (411 – 412). His subsequent examples make clear that the literary gaucherie he refers to consists mainly of the overuse of a single image, especially if it is lowly and material. Angry yelling for thunder, and vomiting for "a rich Man refunding his Treasures" are the first Scriberlus-endorsed metaphors, while he describes the second with examples that chase down all the possible overused expressions that can describe biblical scenes as state negotiation and war (tired metaphors in themselves) over eight lines or more (412). Although the digestive metaphor, especially in the context of a rhetoric manual, is indeed low, the way it is used is hardly worn-out and overworked. Rather, it seems designed to shock his reader out of any complacent expectations from the genre and to prepare her for something new.

We are justified in reading the digestive metaphor at least a bit seriously for two reasons. First, Pope does not shy away from the digestive metaphor in more serious literary endeavors

and in more serious narrative voices than Martin Scriberlus in *Peri Bathous* and *The Dunciad*, as I will later examine in Pope's "translation" of Donne's *Satire II*. Second, just as Pope draws on the classical tradition of the epic to write *Rape of the Lock*, or of lyric poetry to write "Windsor-Forest," he is likewise drawing on a literary tradition of satirical realism with scatological scenes which in England dates back to Chaucer and carries through in its most storied literature, including works by thoroughly respectable writers like Shakespeare, Milton, and Donne.[42] Pope in fact self-consciously alludes to this tradition in a footnote in the *Dunciad*:

> Though this incident may seem too low and base for the dignity of an Epic poem, the learned very well know it to be but a copy of Homer and Virgil; … though our poet (in compliance to modern nicety) has remarkably enriched and coloured his language, as well as raised the versification, in this Episode, and in the following one of Eliza. Mr. Dryden in *Mack-Fleckno*, has not scrupled to mention the *Morning Toast* at which the fishes bite in the Thames, *Pissing Alley, Reliques of the Bumm, &c.,* but our author is more grave and (as a fine writer says of Virgil in his Goergics) *tosses about his* Dung *with an air of Majesty*. If we consider that the exercises of his *Authors* could with justice be no higher than *tickling, chattering, braying,* or *diving*, it was no easy matter to invent such games as were proportioned to the meaner degree of *Booksellers*. In Homer and Virgil, Ajax and Nisus, the persons drawn in the plight are *Heroes*; whereas here they are such with whom it had been great impropriety to have joined any but vile ideas; besides the natural connection there is between Libellers and common Nusances. Nevertheless I have heard our author own, that this part of his Poem was (as it

[42] Cite Smith book here. Check if Anatomy of Criticism has a term for this.

> frequently happens) what cost him most trouble and pleased him least; but that he hoped it was excusable, since levelled at such as understand no delicate stayr… P. (Pope's own note 75 to II.75, p 324)

Just as Fielding's narrator in *Tom Jones* later calls *The Odyssey* "that eating poem," Scriblerus might call all of these epics "those excretory poems." Clearly, this is humorously reductive and a parody of a dunce's literal-minded and oddly pedantic understanding of classical literature and its value, not to mention a stretch since unlike the several feasting scenes in *Tom Jones* and *The Odyssey*, there aren't any scenes about bodily functions in Homer or Virgil. That said, the scatological quotations from England's former poet laureate, John Dryden, are correct. In *Mac Flecknoe*, Dryden lambasts the dullness of his own literary contemporaries by comparing their work to various kinds of waste, and Pope's note emphasizes the bodily kind. Fish feast on the digested remains of someone else's morning toast, pages become toilet paper covered with "reliques of the bum." Notably, the waste has been grossly repurposed in each case: the alley (which can perhaps be thought of as a remnant of a street) turned into a urinal, the turd into fish food, the page into toilet paper. Dryden seems to imply that any talent and inspiration in the works of the authors he lambasts are likewise at least two degrees digested and removed.

Pope thus recognizes and reveals the digestive metaphor's literary lineage, making clear its purpose is to skewer bad writing (and bad writers), especially in comparison to the classic greats, part of a larger project "to satirize undigested and misapplied learning."[43] However, the scene in *The Dunciad* that this note glosses also makes clear that the metaphor has a peculiar dynamic, taking on a life of its own. The negative moral force of the metaphorical excrement hardly touches its producer:

[43] Pope and Steeves, *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, xliii.

Full in the middle way there stood a lake,
Which Curl's Corinna chanc'd that morn to make:
(Such was her wont, at early dawn to drop
Her evening cates before his neighbour's shop,)
Here fortun'd Curl to slide; loud shout the band,
And Bernard! Bernard! Rings thro' all the Strand.
Obscene with filth the miscreant lies bewraye'd
Fal'n in the plash his wickedness had laid:
(*The Dunciad*, II.69 – 76, p 324)

The possessives in this passage are slippery: the "evening cates" belong to Corinna but Corinna belongs to Curl. She drops them not in front of *her*, but *his* neighbor's shop, and since hardly anyone will travel across town to empty a chamber pot, one can only assume that Corinna has shacked up with Curl. Corinna has a lot of strikes against her as a character. Her excrement is made of last evening's cates – meaning dainty, presumably French, cuisine – a common shorthand at the time to indicate an addiction to luxury and a matching moral turpitude, which is confirmed in her affair with Curl. Her taste for delicacies contrasts with her indelicacy in chucking the contents of her toilet out onto the public street – done by herself and not by a maid the poem implies because it is *her* wont. Despite these indications of her immorality, Corinna is able to separate herself entirely from the excrement she produces, coming away fairly cleanly as the poem dances daintily around her character. Curl, on the other hand, receives fortune's comeuppance as he slips, slides, and lands in her filthy lake. He is called a "miscreant," but the only immediate evidence of a crime is the act of falling into the excrement. Most interestingly,

he has "fal'n in the plash his wickedness had laid" – the poem ultimately lays the blame for Corinna's mess squarely on Curl.

Pope glosses this incident so that the reader understands that it is based on a personal grievance: "Corinna" is Elizabeth Thomas, mistress to Henry Cromwell. She sold Pope's letters to Cromwell to the publisher Curl without either of the other men's consent, which Curl promptly published. This is certainly one way to explain why Curl ultimately receives the blame for Corinna's waste. However, the allegorical scene in *The Dunciad* ostensibly representing a historical incident also seems to deal with the problem of literary excrement, including those who produce it, and those who encounter it. The misattribution of Corinna's filth to Curl demonstrates that even when the producer is able to get rid of it, it still causes problems for those who later encounter it. Curl's receipt of the blame suggests that while it's one thing to produce literary waste, it's quite another to perpetuate it, either by publishing it or not looking closely enough around you to realize you're about to land in it.

In this episode of *The Dunciad*, Pope uses excrement primarily as an uncomplicated tool of moral judgment – a signifier of disgust. However, as moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum cautions, anything that arouses our disgust is "always suspect or problematic, in need of special scrutiny."[44] In this instance, Pope doesn't give the reader much else to analyze about this piece of literary excrement beyond its origin in Corinna's taste for luxuries, but he goes into much greater detail on its mechanics and meanings in *Peri Bathous*, unequivocally equating subpar literary outputs with excrement and a hack writer's rhetoric with the digestive process. However, his use, and thus our interpretation, of these metaphorical modes of digestion and excrement is varied

[44] Nussbaum, "'Secret Sewers of Vice': Disgust, Bodies and the Law," 22.

and ambivalent – moral disgust is only one aspect of its significance.[45] Even if some of Pope's readers find scatological subjects undignified and unsavory, it is an undeniable part of the English literary tradition. Pope uses it not only to insinuate moral judgements, but also to explore how a literary tradition can continue to change and grow while still honoring the great classics. This is the other side of Pope's digestive metaphor, which he interrogates and integrates as a model for a modern English rhetoric in his parody of a rhetoric manual, *Peri Bathous*.

THE MECHANICS AND ECONOMICS OF DIGESTION

Pope connects the digestive process and the metaphor of bodily waste to the literary economy of his day. By digesting literary classics into works of little merit for mass consumption, Pope claims that many of his peers are laying waste to their literary heritage. Steeves describes how Pope realized "not only the fact that writing can be incredibly bad," but also "the causes, the occasions, and the encouragements of that badness, and with the constantly deteriorating taste of a public emerging from illiteracy but still uneducated. It deals not only with mediocre writers, but with the patrons, the purveyors, the servitors, and the hangers-on of Grub Street."[46] Pope's satires were influenced by the shifting economics and practices of the literary marketplace at the time. While most authors sold their copyright to publishers and made limited amounts on each text, Pope "quickly learned how to negotiate financially advantageous terms."[47] At a more macro level, "[a]lmost contemporaneously with Pope's birth in 1688, the economic

[45] Rachel Herz's work argues that the emotion of disgust is entirely learned, and that disgust doesn't become hardwired in us until we know the meaning of it. This theory is in line with how Pope uses disgusting subjects, like excrement, as a tool for teaching discernment in readers. (Herz, *That's Disgusting*.)
[46] Pope and Steeves, *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, li–lii.
[47] Ingrassia, "Money," 180.

landscape of England changed dramatically, moving from the traditionally land-based model of wealth to a world shaped by possibilities and contingencies of … 'paper credit'."[48] Pope seemed to take inspiration from the paper credit financial model, similarly selling advance subscriptions to his Homer translations. Meanwhile, struggling "Grub Street writers, motivated perhaps by envy as much as by outrage, constantly castigated Pope for his financial acumen and apparent avarice."[49] Pope was alarmed not only by the intellectual and aesthetic vacuity of the bad writing of his day, but also by the alacrity with which the reading public paid for "excrement."

At the same time, digestion was beginning to be understood to be more or less mechanical in nature, as epitomized by Jacques de Vaucanson's automata, the *Canard Digérateur* (1739). With this link to an essentially mechanical nature, digestion becomes a sign of a mindless, automated nature as well as a sign of life. Digestion, which turns into gross waste, is also a sign of vitality in that healthful things are incorporated to make the living organism stronger. Pope consistently links digestion to language and the creative process, and not just as a denunciation of degraded social and literary trends. As I have previously observed, the digestive metaphor crops up not just in satires directed against Pope's literary foes, or in critiques of the state of rhetoric in Augustan England, but also in his own work of translating ancient classics and versifying not-so-ancient classics into English. By digging into the nuances of how language is digested in Pope, we uncover anxiety about the relatively new technology in Pope's time – cheap, mechanically reproduced texts available to a wider reading public than ever before – and its consequences to a literary tradition of writers trying to meet that new demand rather than write for writing's sake.

[48] Ingrassia, 176.
[49] Bell, "Not Lucre's Madman: Pope, Money, and Independence," 63.

The mechanical nature of organic matter was a topic of growing interest in Pope's day. After Robert Boyle's discovery in the late seventeenth century that the heart was a pump that circulated blood throughout the body, natural philosophers took an interest in the nascent field of biological science, which to some seemed to suggest that how organic life, including human bodies, was merely the sum of various bodily mechanisms. Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *L'homme machine* (1748) epitomizes this mechanistic materialist view of the life, and helps to explain why talented makers of automata, machines that simulate living beings, were considered god-like creators of "living" beings. One of the most famous automata in this time, which toured around Europe, eagerly viewed by royalty, intellectuals, and ordinary folks alike, was the digesting duck. Besides being intricately, realistically, and beautifully assembled to resemble a duck on the outside, it seemed to resemble a duck on the inside too as it ate kernels of grain and finished its meal by producing an appropriately duck-like scat, therefore apparently digesting it. This duck's digestive process seemed to prove that life could be created and sustained from an assemblage of mechanical parts; the only problem for understanding and interpreting it, in retrospect, was that the apparent digestion was a trick, the scats being pre-stored inside the belly of the duck until it was time to excrete.[50]

Vaucanson's duck's scat and Pope's implied result of digesting literature highlight the problem of interpreting waste matter, no matter whether the reaction it provokes is fascination, disgust, or something else altogether. Excrement is not always easy to interpret because it is opaque, dense, and an undifferentiated mass. On the one hand, it is proof of a functioning metabolism. On the other hand, it proves the inevitable outcome of waste and decay. When excrement is invoked in art and literature, it is very often used to either mislead or present a

[50] Kang, *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines*, 111.

dystopian vision to the viewer or reader. The digesting duck was a fake, and excrement in Pope's work is a sure sign of fakery too, whether it be hack poets masquerading as poet laureates in *The Dunciad* or *Peri Bathous* as a fake rhetoric manual. However, in Pope, the excrement, although so often described, is almost beside the point. Just as Vaucanson's digesting duck shows that the crux of the issue isn't the scat but the mechanism that pretends to produce it, Pope suggests in *Peri Bathous* that bad poetry is also the result of the problematic mechanisms, both rhetorical and historical, that (pretend to) produce it.

It starts in *Peri Bathous* with this dubious definition of poetry:

> Poetry is a *natural* or *morbid Secretion from the Brain*. As I would not suddenly stop a Cold in the Head, or dry up my Neighbour's Issue, I would as little hinder him from necessary Writing. It may be affirm'd with great truth, that there is hardly any human Creature past Childhood, but at one time or other has had some Poetical Evacuation, and no question was much the better for it in his Health; so true is the Saying, *Nascimur Poetae:* Therefore is the Desire of Writing properly term'd *Pruritus*, the *Titillation of the Generative Faculty of the Brain;* and the Person is said to *conceive;* Now such as conceive must *bring forth.* I have known a Man thoughtful, melancholy, and raving for divers days, who forthwith grew wonderfully easy, lightsome and cheerful, upon a Discharge of the peccant Humour, in exceeding purulent Metre. (PB, chap III, p 392)

Notice that poetry is always a secretion, whether natural – a normal bodily function – or morbid – the result of a disease. Pope's comic alter-ego, Scriblerus, takes the scientific, rather than aesthetic or moral, view of excrescences here, namely that they should be allowed to flow and that to block them would be tantamount to encouraging the development of disease. Still, the

effect of Pope's description of his neighbor's issue and poetical evacuations makes one wish that the potential poet got rid of their bodily effluvia – and writings – a little more discreetly, without sharing it in public. Both the child and the thoughtful, melancholy man succumb to the disease of poetry, but on actually composing something, immediately feel better. While this description probably hits close to home for any writer who has struggled to write down and elaborate on an idea [ahem], it also sounds an awful lot like an early modern medical manual, where draining an excessive humour (i.e. the black bile of melancholy) was meant to restore the balance of the four humours which was the marker for health in the Galenic model, a medical model still prevalent in the early eighteenth century. Just like leeches could suck out an excess of the blood that represented the sanguine humour, giving the poor boy or man a pen and piece of paper gave vent to an uneasy mind. Pope hams up the effect of his description, matching the man's peccant Humour to an exceedingly purulent – puss-filled – meter in poetry.

Nascimur poetae, meanwhile, is only half the original quotation, much like *Peri Bathous* only gives half of the rhetoric lesson in each chapter: just enough to help the aspiring writer make a mess of things. The full saying, sometimes ascribed to Cicero, is *nascimur poetae, fimus oratorus*: we are born poets, we are made orators. It's a wink at the futility of this farce of a rhetoric manual that teaches poetry, which apparently is unteachable. Yet *Peri Bathous* does not end there and then in the face of its inevitable defeat. It persists, much like the dunce poets it purportedly exists to serve. Yet that persistence does not seem to be only a joke, since most good writing usually takes a good deal of time and effort. Petrarch asserted that study and persistence are essential to produce literary achievements (he read his literary models thousands of times), and Bacon notes that excellent literature must be savored and digested. Scriblerus here describes

that persistence as an itch – *pruritus* – which quickly becomes sexualized with his own definition of the word: the titillation of the generative faculty … of the brain.

As happens so often when one starts with an excremental metaphor, it quickly evolves into an analogy of conception and birth.[51] Greene observes this in his analysis of the history of metaphors describing *imitatio* too, describing, "in these digestive and apian analogies there lies in germ the obsessive analogy of rebirth."[52] This thin line between digestion and conception metaphors seems to appear in Scriberlus's mention of the Latin motto, *nascimur poetae* in the context of a discussion on bodily effluvia. This in turn recalls another famous Latin saying, possibly from Augustine of Hippo, *inter faeces et urinam nascimur* – we are born between shit and piss. Normally taken to be a bleak comment on the human condition, this variation takes on additional meaning from its context in *Peri Bathous*, where the "Florid Stile" is described similarly to Swift's gaudy tulips raised from dung.

> Than which none is more proper to the *Bathos*, as Flowers which are the Lowest of Vegetables are most *Gaudy*, and do many times grow in great Plenty at the bottom of *Ponds* and *Ditches*. (PB Chap XII, p 423)

Out of sewage grow the most colorful flowers, an observation that in neither Swift's nor Pope's cases seems a compliment to the flowers. In all of these cases, there is a tension between the fertility of the excrement that seems to give birth – to the baby, the tulips, and the florid style – but also a clear denigration of the object that would be born in – and of – such circumstances. Fertility and growth, though an essential component of all life, are not here viewed as "miracles." The tone in each case is more of detached, scientific marvel at the persistence of growth in such

[51] I explore this connection between digestive and paternal/maternal models of authorship in more detail in my chapter on Jonathan Swift.
[52] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 99.

gross circumstances rather than of aesthetic wonder at their objective beauties. This mock scientific, investigative tone in the face of excremental objects occurs again in the didactic analogy Scriblerus offers, "The Physician, by the Study and Inspection of Urine and Ordure, approves himself in the Science; and in like sort should our Author accustom and exercise his Imagination upon the Dregs of Nature" (PB, Chap. VII, p 401). Here, the excremental metaphor no longer forms the basis for an extension into a fertility metaphor, which now seems to be of dubious value, but rather as a means for understanding natural systems. In Pope, the digestive metaphor loses its positive parallel with metaphors of birth and rebirth, and instead signals the result and waste of a system.

Just as excrement-as-fertilizer besmirches anything that grows out of it, the persistent fact of excrement also raises questions about the system that produced it. *Peri Bathous* is not only a critique of Pope's bathetic contemporary writers, but of literary and rhetorical educations that attempt to overly systematize an individualized, creative process. As Scriblerus puts it,

> I grant, that to excel in the *Bathos* a Genius is requisite; yet the Rules of Art must be allow'd so far useful, as to add Weight, or as I may say, hang on Lead, to facilitate and enforce our Descent, to guide us to the most advantageous Declivities, and habituate our Imagination to a Depth of thinking. Many there are that can fall, but few can arrive at the Felicity of falling gracefully (PB, Chap. IV, p 394)

He argues – in quite reasonable language – that the point of the rules and the systemization of art is to learn how to fall gracefully – recalling the earlier Latin dictum that poets are not taught, but orators can be. But if it were true that rules were only weights shackling the creative mind, wouldn't poets emerge, *inter faeces et urinam*, fully formed as literary geniuses? Clearly no one

would think this the case, especially not a poet like Pope who spent so much of his career writing literary imitations, translations, and versifications – all of which require a deep knowledge of the rules of the poetic game. Rhetorical rules and systems thus are not disregarded in *Peri Bathous*; rather, they are the heart of it. What is actually at stake is how to understand and use them in an organic, living way so that the English language and its literature can also remain vital.

COOKERY AND PLAGIARISM

In *Peri Bathous*, rhetoric manuals are transformed from educational tracts to mere recipes to copy without thought: anyone can do it. Pope writes a whole chapter dedicated to writing a poem like making dinner in "Chap. XV: *A Receipt to make an* Epic Poem."

> An Epic Poem, the Criticks agree, is the greatest Work Human Nature is capable of. They have already laid down many mechanical Rules for Compositions of this Sort, but at the same time, they cut off almost all Undertakers from the Possibility of ever performing them; for the first Qualification they unanimously require in a Poet, is a *Genius*. I shall here endeavor (for the Benefit of my Countrymen) to make it manifest, that Epick Poems may be made *without a Genius*, nay without Learning or much Reading. This must necessarily be of great Use to all who confess they never *Read*, and of whom the World is convinc'd they never *Learn*. *Moliere* observes of making a Dinner, that any Man can do it *with Money*, and if a profess'd Cook cannot do it *without* he has his Art for nothing; the same may be said of making a Poem, 'tis easily brought about by him that *has* a Genius, but the Skill lies in doing it

> without one. In pursuance of this End, I shall present the Reader with a plan and certain *Recipe*, by which any Author in the *Bathos* may be qualified for this grand Performance. (PB, XV, p 433)

This opening establishes the necessity of the chapter by complaining of prior impractical manuals for writing epics. What good can a manual be if the very first step is not universally available: who can find a genius these days? It reads like a marketing blurb for a magical product or a get-rich-quick scheme. And there is more than a passing resemblance to the latter, given the analogy advertising the value of this chapter to the dunce poet. Paraphrased: it's easy to have a delicious dinner if you have money, but cooking skills can produce the same result for less. Likewise, it's possible for a genius to write an epic, but the real skill is writing one without any talent. Of course, in both the kitchen and the writer's garret, money is at stake. To eat dinner, the hack poet will have to write a saleable poem, or else repeat the fate of the poet Colley Cibber (originally "Tibbald" aka Lewis Theobald) in *The Dunciad* who sits "Swearing and supperless" (1.115, p. 312).

Emphasizing the economic incentives at stake, this opening is addressed as much to "any Author in the *Bathos*" as to their publishers. The invocation in the second sentence of the "Undertakers" is what gives this away – an "undertaker" is an interesting noun, which in the early eighteenth-century signified all manners of people in all kinds of personal, business, or political milieux. Just like its strong association today with those who work in the death business, in Pope's time it had strong literary connotations, two alternate definitions being "One who undertakes the preparation of a literary work," and an adjacent definition being "A book publisher" (*OED*). And if this chapter is addressed as much to the publisher as to an author, the invocation begins to read as a recipe for how to publish more without the expense of hiring

genuine writers. One sign of this is the difference between the two uses of "a genius." In the first instance it reads as an adjective describing the "first Qualification" critics require in a Poet – *Genius*. However, in the second instance, Scriblerus's claim "that Epick Poems may be made *without a Genius*" reads more as a noun – and as the elimination of an extra expense of hiring someone to produce original work.

Instead of obtaining a genius, who might be expensive to employ, Scriblerus explains how hack writers can effectively copy sections from several different works and combine them all together to pass off as fresh enough to sell anew. To whip up a plot (a.k.a. the "Fable"), Scriblerus instructs aspiring authors:

> Take out of any old Poem, History-book, Romance, or Legend, (for Instance *Geffry of Monmouth* or *Don Belianis of Greece*) those Parts of Story which afford most Scope for *long Descriptions*: Put these Pieces together, and throw all the Adventures you fancy into *one Tale*. (XV, 433)

The language of cooking suggests that the composite will form a whole, new dish, undermining the premise of pure plagiarism. Likewise, Scriblerus instructs the author to let his hero "work" over the course of twelve books – that is, ferment – and elsewhere to "strain" the fable sufficiently. These terms denote processes that require time, determination, and some skill, and thus it becomes clear that the kind of plagiarism Scriblerus describes is not a straight cut-and-paste, but something more complicated. It sounds like a dumbed-down version of *imitatio*, a version that is within reach of a non-genius.

This interpretation of Pope's "receipt" makes it clear that he is less concerned about the appropriation of historical sources than the quality of their reworking: whether the cooking is any good, to keep the culinary metaphor consistent. This is a somewhat controversial position for

Pope to take. While he certainly doesn't endorse plagiarism, he seems more comfortable using classical sources as the basis for his own creative work than many of his contemporaries and future critics. As Richard Terry notes, allegations "that Pope had capitalized a little too much on the classical sources he regularly used, were ones that were to cast a pall over his poetry, in his own lifetime and afterwards."[53] Terry's investigation into charges of plagiarism against Pope reveals an author at odds with his times, as plagiarism and imitation were increasingly conflated. Eighteenth-century literary critics like John Dennis, Samuel Richardson, and John Warton identified Pope's style based on its proximity to plagiarism, and expressed regret that Pope limited himself to this mode. In 1753, Warton differentiated between imitation and plagiarism, but as a scholar does when two terms are too often casually elided.[54] Meanwhile, in 1759, Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* "tends to elide imitation and plagiarism" completely.[55] While Pope was an acknowledged master of his type of poetry, that type was increasingly suspect. These critics posed the question "whether the very nature of his artistic achievement is compromised by a radical failure of originality."[56] Mark Rose demonstrates how this "eighteenth-century discourse of original genius" merged with a contemporaneous "liberal discourse of property" that was becoming complicated as changing copyright laws meant that property was increasingly understood as not only physical goods but also began to include non-tangible intellectual property.[57] It thus becomes clear that Pope is being judged on the basis of

[53] Terry, "Pope and Plagiarism," 599.
[54] Terry, 605.
[55] Terry, 607.
[56] Terry, 607.
[57] Rose, *Authors and Owners*, 6. Rose goes on to synthesize evidence of this connection between this shift to expectations of originality and the changes to copyright law that began in 1710 under the Statute of Anne: "As David Quint has shown, the notion of originality had roots in Renaissance literature, but the representation of originality as a central value in cultural production developed [Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature*.], as M.H. Abram's classic study reveals, in precisely the same period as the notion of the author's property right [Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*.]. As late as 1711 Alexander Pope could still evoke the idea of the poet as the reproducer of traditional truths, speaking of '*True Wit*' as '*Nature* to Advantage drest, / What oft was

different standards and conventions than what he held himself to – in this case, that his proficiency in imitation is no longer shared among many of his contemporaries but is rather a "throwback" to an older style of rhetorical education more common from the classical period to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

At least one eighteenth-century critic understood the distinction Pope is trying to draw between plagiarism and imitation in his recipe for epic poetry, however. Percival Stockdale defends Pope in *An Inquiry into the Nature, and Genuine Laws of Poetry; Including a Particular Defence of the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1778) and in his *Lectures* (1807). Terry reports Stockdale's stance:

> [H]e does not challenge the assertion that Pope takes material from other authors, rather he accepts it but finds a way of condoning it. For Pope's practice is one of rejuvenating and enhancing the words of others. For Stockdale, the 'true' plagiarist is an author devoid of creativity, bent upon a furtive 'transcription' and 'piracy' of other authors' words. Pope's technique, on the other hand, is one in which the works of earlier authors are smoothly harmonized with his own, and his borrowings are magnanimously open, not skulking, nor beset by an anxiety 'that the obligations should be concealed.'[58]

My assessment is closest to Stockdale's, and he describes what I think is at stake in this part of *Peri Bathous*. Scriblerus prescribes a furtive piracy, sneaking sections of non-canonical works into his hack writers' epics, essentially reusing their words like so much of an ingredient that will

---

Thought, but ne'er so well Exprest' (*Poems* 1:272-273). Seven years earlier, however, John Dennis made originality the basis for his praise of Milton (1:333 -334) [Dennis, *The Critical Works of John Dennis*.], and in 1728 Edward Young was also insisting on its importance ["On Lyric Poetry" in Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*.] By the 1770s the doctrine of originality was orthodox, and Samuel Johnson in his 'Life of Milton' (1779) could state flatly, 'The highest praise of genius is original invention' (*Lives* 1:194)."

[58] Terry, "Pope and Plagiarism," 608.

spoil if it is not repurposed. Thus fermentation and straining are not signs of a true author's artful recreation of these original ingredients, but instead resemble Plato's critique of rhetoric as mere cookery, meaning the ethically dubious practice of disguising poor ingredients (and bad ideas) to make them attractive. Once this better distinction between imitation and plagiarism is drawn, it becomes clear that Pope shares Plato's view of the cooking metaphor, if not his overall assessment on the value of rhetoric. The qualities of Pope's imitations – the harmonizing of his own literary features with the older source materials and his open acknowledgment of his "obligations" even in his titles – instead suggest that Pope's preferred metaphor for successful imitation would be genealogical. As Rudy has described, "[f]rom *A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* on, Pope continued to position himself as the scion of a literary bloodline that extended straight back to his revered ancients" – once again the digestive metaphor runs in the copulative.[59] This time, however, they are no longer benign alternatives on a single list of well-worn tropes, but have begun to signify a crucial difference in Pope's rhetoric, with digestive waste and cookery associated with plagiarism on the one hand, and genealogical metaphors signifying a legitimate incorporation of classical material, on the other. Pope nonetheless adjusts the metaphors to represent wholesome meat and illicit copulation just often enough not to let his reader become complacent in a single-sided metaphor.

Pope's framing device of this chapter – a recipe – also reintroduces the importance of London's book trade in the early eighteenth century, as cookbooks were a notably growing genre at the time (unlike rhetoric manuals, of which there are surprisingly few from the whole eighteenth century). The circumstances, authors, and audiences attracted to cookbooks, as opposed to those rhetoric manuals, likewise reflect the big changes underway in Britain's literary

[59] Rudy, "Pope, Swift, and the Poetics of Posterity," 4.

culture at the time. For instance, Pope's focus on the cost of goods and dubious skills in this chapter shows concern that good, original writing is being disincentivized by market conditions. There is plenty of evidence that the increasing affordability of texts, and rising literacy rates, changed the interests and tastes of the growing market of book-buyers, which led to a proliferation of published material and even new genres, like the English novel. Other, less literary but perennially popular genres flourished too; Gilly Lehmann describes a major shift in the genre of cookbooks that occurred after the Restoration. Cookbooks have always been an aspirational genre, but the level of aspiration, the readers whom they appealed to, and the level of practical advice changed greatly. Robert May's cookbook, *The Accomplisht Cook* (1660), represents the old guard well. A chef to several noble families during his career, at the age of 72 May published this cookbook, which seemed to capitalize on a nostalgic public mood during the Commonwealth. Describing how to produce a set-piece for the banquet, he concludes,

> These were formerly the delights of the Nobility, before good Housekeeping had left *England*, and the Sword really acted that which was only counterfeited in such honest and laudable Exercises as these.[60]

May's book was less a practical guide than a nostalgic glimpse into the glamorous feasts of the of the old guard. Although he included some new and cosmopolitan flavors, May relied heavily on sweet flavors and techniques dating back to medieval times, and like Pope, he labels new tastes and demands counterfeits of older "honest and laudable Exercises" – a description which could well describe Pope's own feelings about the status of imitation.

Importantly, May's cookbook was addressed to a much more limited audience than was to become the norm in the eighteenth century. As Lehmann notes, "[a]n ambitious work like

[60] May, *The Accomplisht Cook.* As quoted in Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, 39.

Robert May's, representing the cookery practiced in the wealthiest houses, cannot have been of interest to those below the level of the upper gentry or the richest merchants." However, that was changing.

> Robert Earle suggests that by the end of the seventeenth-century, the middle-class (made up of the professions and the commercial classes) was "almost universally literate," and that books were being produced to cater to their thirst for self-improvement; amongst these were, of course, manuals for cookery.[61]

This new middle class wanted simpler adaptations of aspirational dishes, and so a new type of cookbook author emerged in the eighteenth century to fill this demand: female servants (and not just those who kept house for the nobility) who sold their books based on their experience as (relatively) household cooks and housekeepers. They understood their readers' desire for upward mobility, and so offered them an education in how to not only eat but also comport themselves like their betters. Cookbooks were good business, and this new breed of female author wrote with "the hope that authorship might bring sufficient rewards to … retire from her career as a servant" – showing how cookbooks might have been a more profitable genre than anything Grub Street produced.[62] Indeed, the eighteenth century saw the first generation of celebrity chefs, precursors to Julia Child and Martha Stewart. Hannah Woolley was the first, and Lehmann describes her as "[t]he most prolific author of the period 1660 – 1675" and "the first woman to try to make money, if not a living, from writing cookery books."[63] While this is a notable achievement in the social advancement of women, the cultural caché of someone like Woolley,

[61] Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*, 10. As quoted in Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, 62.
[62] Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, 61.
[63] Lehmann, 48.

compared to someone like May, might be compared to the difference between Grub Street hack writers and Pope.

Lehmann describes a "process of diffusion followed by distortion and devaluation" in the cookbook market and fits it into Norbert Elias's broader historical narrative in *The Civilizing Process*, which she describes as a recurrent process of the élite abandoning certain styles once they have been picked up and imitated by those below them. "The older style, now rejected by the élite, continued its progress downwards, becoming ever more distorted."[64] Pope's recipe for epic poetry enacts this process of distortion and devaluation by oversimplifying the process of drawing inspiration from past sources to create a new work in an established genre – with the possibility of infinite replication, as with a recipe for a dish. Whereas his elite literary contemporaries seem to have rejected imitation as it adopted and diffused by lesser writers looking for ways to write something quick and sellable, Pope maintained his value for imitation and its rhetorical cousins, translation and versification, making him a misunderstood outlier in the eighteenth century.

However, I do not view Pope as a quixotic figure clinging to an obsolete approach to imitation based on classical humanistic models which his contemporaries no long understood or appreciated. Pope's imitative literary techniques earned him a great deal of money, particularly for his translations of the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, which scholars have estimated at a princely sum of £10,000.[65] Pope's translation of the *Iliad* "not only established his position as the greatest poet of the age, but also brought him the beginnings of the fortune that would make him the first English poet to prosper solely from the public sale of his work." As Terry notes, "Pope's most substantial

[64] Lehmann, 56. She is referencing Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 100–101.
[65] McLaverty, "Pope and the Book Trade," 186. Ingrassia, "Money."

literary undertakings, and certainly his biggest money-spinners, were the Homeric translations, and it was inevitable that these should also fall victim to allegations of plagiarism."[66] As Pope himself noted, "He would never need a noble patron's purse of gold or a governmental sinecure, for now, 'thanks to Homer,' he could 'live and thrive,/ Indebted to no Prince or Peer alive.'"[67] This success made him look to some to be the most successful hack writer of them all. Pope "was more active in his pursuit of money than either his embarrassment or his rhetorical disdain would suggest," but he would deny all of this, as he "was always very conscious of what we might now call marketing an image of himself."[68] Paradoxically, Pope "claimed independence in the sense of not being beholden to anyone – a significant claim in an age of extensive patronage," thanks to his ability to live by writing – just like the hack writers he tirelessly ridiculed. "Hack writers" wrote to order for a fee: professional writers with no real literary pretentions. The term first emerged in the early eighteenth century to describe what were also known as "Grub Street writers," in honor of the street housing a number of poor writers in garrets and second-rate publishers. These writers represented a new paradigm in the eighteenth century because they showed that the publishing market could sustain professional writers for the first time: "Before authors could become professionals," Rose points out, "a certain level of production and consumption of printed materials had to be attained, and this, as Terry Belanger among others has emphasized, did not occur until the eighteenth century."[69]

In the early eighteenth century as before, hack writers' opposites were writers good enough – or well-connected enough – to have a wealthy patron. However, Pope presented

[66] Terry, "Pope and Plagiarism," 599.
[67] Williams, *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, xiii.
[68] Bell, "Not Lucre's Madman: Pope, Money, and Independence," 61–62.
[69] Rose, *Authors and Owners*, 4. Reference is to Belanger, "Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England."

himself an entirely different breed of writer who could afford to write according to his own wishes – and no one else's – neither for the market nor for a patron. While Pope's Homeric translations put him on the path to financial independence, Jody Greene writes, "the publication of *The Dunciad* signals the end to fifteen years of translating and collectively publishing," and Pope's return to original composition, yet even then, she notes, Pope required "the assistance of three noble lords, the prime minister, and the king himself" as well as a "piratical female bookseller" in order to publish *The Dunciad*.[70] Greene argues that, even as the changing landscape of the book trade in the eighteenth century made financial independence for writers ostensibly possible for the first time, in reality "the risks of authorship" including payment for their work, lawsuits, and even "physical chastisement" meant that even writers like Pope were still dependent on powerful friends and booksellers who were willing to assume the legal responsibility for the published work.[71] Interestingly, Greene shows that these patrons and booksellers were often women, who could "shelter the rights of the male author behind a bulwark of feminine mediation."[72] Thus, Pope's much-vaunted independence was not absolute. While his exceptional talent and hard work did earn him financial independence, he earned the most money from his translations rather than any original works, and he still required political and legal patronage to be able to publish works like *The Dunciad* and *Peri Bathous*.

For his part, Pope took aim at those writers and publishers who tried to enrich themselves by meeting the demands of the current market rather than writing works good enough to be passed on to posterity. He describes hack writers' "true Design," a phrase which implicates both their personal intentions and their literary plots, to be "*Profit* or *Gain*; in order to acquire which,

[70] Greene, *The Trouble with Ownership*, 167.
[71] Greene, 167.
[72] Greene, 153.

'tis necessary to procure Applause, by administering *Pleasure* to the Reader: From whence it follows demonstrably, that their Productions must be suited to the *present Taste*" (PB, ch II, p 391). That taste is not for the sublime, but rather the "*Profound*," which "strikes universally, and is adapted to every Capacity" (PB, ch II, p 391). In other words, the greatest profit comes from appealing to the lowest common denominator among readers. In *Peri Bathous*, Pope sets himself apart from those who will stoop to those depths, but he too is unable to stand apart from the conditions of the literary economy. In *The Dunciad*, Pope describes "those days, when (after Providence had permitted the invention of printing as a scourge for the sins of the learned) Paper also became so cheap, and Printers so numerous, that a deluge of Authors covered the land" (Martin Scriblerus Of the Poem, p. 304). In *Peri Bathous* he refers to the consequence of the broad availability of the materials and labor for printing literature of all kinds, as well as the growth of a much larger but less cultivated readership, as the "flourishing State of our Trade, and the Plenty of our Manufacture" (PB, ch 1, p 389). Pope's vision of the production of literature as a kind of manufacture underlies his contemporaries' critique of him as little more than a plagiarist as well as Pope's critique of his contemporaries as mechanized digestors of literature.

Pope uses metaphors of fertility and organic growth (i.e. "richness of the soil) in his Preface to the *Iliad* to characterize his most lucrative work as Homer's translator. In it, he describes himself as tending to the original text like a gardener: "It is the first grand Duty of an Interpreter to give his Author entire and unmaim'd; and for the rest, the *Diction* and *Versification* only are his proper Province; since these must be his own, but the others he is to take as he finds them" (Preface to the Iliad, 452). Pope's advertised sense of his position as translator (or "interpreter" as he calls it here – a somewhat larger role) is to intervene in a limited way to preserve the original text within the bounds of his own sense of proper diction and versification.

Nonetheless, just how much Pope intervenes into the original text – and the amount of originality he introduces into it – is a problem either way. Either he has intervened too much, thereby changing the character of the original great work, or he has intervened too little and is merely reprinting a classic work under his own name, both plagiarizing and financially benefiting from it. Daniel Defoe, in an essay which debates whether Pope's *Odyssey* constitutes plagiarism, ultimately absolves Pope of the charge, albeit facetiously, by insisting on another metaphor for Pope's work. Defoe's essay ultimately "argues that Pope should be absolved from any blame but it does so by reducing literature to the conventions of manufacture, and by happily conceding that some duplicity of procedure might be endemic even to the greatest creative talents."[73] Defoe is referring to Pope's use of contracted labor for the translation from the Greek, and thus shifts the focus from Pope's more aspirational fertile garden metaphor into one appropriate for Pope's modern eighteenth-century conditions: a metaphor of manufacture. This is the most damning point against Pope, one he concealed from his subscribers. "The whole business does not look up to the ethical standards Pope proposed for himself in his later poetry."[74] Maynard Mack condemns it as "a shabby business all round … a dishonest cover-up for the sake of gain."[75] With this concession to efficiency in his Homeric translations, Pope becomes implicated by his own satire, as he satirizes the manufacturing model in *Peri Bathous* with his rhetorical chest of drawers.

ON THE IRRESISTIBLE LOGIC OF MECHANICS

[73] Terry, "Pope and Plagiarism," 600.
[74] Bell, "Not Lucre's Madman: Pope, Money, and Independence," 63.
[75] Mack, *Alexander Pope*, 414. As quoted in Bell, "Not Lucre's Madman: Pope, Money, and Independence," 63.

Pope's thirteenth chapter, which in the first edition was the first part of an appendix elaborating on the mock rhetoric manual, contains "A Project for the Advancement of the Bathos." It reads like a modest proposal by a madcap genius intent not only on documenting, but also furthering, the bathous cause. (My allusion notwithstanding, it should be noted that *Peri Bathous* precedes Swift's *Modest Proposal* by about two years). It is first a call to arms: "our Number is confessedly far superior to that of the Enemy, there seems nothing wanting but Unanimity among ourselves" (XIII, 428). The objective of this enterprise is "this single Consideration, that nothing is of equal consequence to the Success of our Works, as *Speed* and *Dispatch*" (XIV, 413). The clear solution for increased productivity, Scriblerus writes, is to form a trade group of the best specialists and to create a joint assembly line to combine their several pieces of rhetoric into a single literary product. His inspiration is "[t]he vast Improvement of modern Manufactures" that came from them "being divided into several Branches, and parcel'd out to several *Trades*" (XIII, 428). He compares "our Art" – poetry – one of the "other Arts of this Age," for instance, "*Clockmaking*" (XIII, 428). As suitable employees, he suggests "young Men of Quality," "Soldiers," and "Seamen" to produce hyperbole, "Country Farmers" for circumlocution, and "Old Men at their Clubs" for proverbs. In this factory, "a Poet or Orator would have no more to do, but to send to the particular Traders for each Kind," for instance, "to the Metaphorist for his Allegories," such that "the superior Artist [has] nothing to do but to put together all the Materials" (XIII, 429). The problem with the joke is that it cuts remarkably close to Pope's own literary accomplishments. As Defoe noted, Pope hired translators to assist in his versions of the Homeric epics, and Pope likewise asserted in his prefaces that his intervention into the original texts was minimal.

Perhaps the most infamous part of this chapter is the concluding proposal for a "Rhetorical Chest of Drawers," which Scriblerus says should "be contrived with all convenient Dispatch, at the publick Expense" (XIII, 429). In it, he describes a manner of writing that resembles printing, using terms like "composer," the term for the person who picks out the individual letters and combines them in preparation for printing. However, instead of individual letters waiting to be blocked together from each drawer, there would be "matter and Argument in the several Kinds of Oration or Writing" (XIII, 429). A "composer" is of course also a musical term, a connection Pope reemphasizes by calling attention to "all the Registers" contained in these drawers, "which will be drawn out much in the Manner of those in an organ." In these comparisons, the deliberative, demonstrative, and judicial stock phrases (another term equally applicable to language and music) supplied in these drawers take on the role of individual letters and notes, which are then formed into (presumably) coherent texts. However, rhetoric, even if prefabricated, has more intrinsic meaning – and power – than either letters or notes, which Scriblerus acknowledges in his instruction that the keys to the drawers must be held by someone "of unquestion'd Loyalty and Affection to every present Establishment in *Church* and *State*, which will sufficiently guard against any Mischief which might otherwise be apprehended from it" (XIII, 430). Thus, rhetoric becomes materialized and contained in this manual of fake rhetoric. However, Pope shows that doing so strips rhetoric of its power and makes it ludicrous, as the literal reading of "a rhetorical chest of drawers" – a chest of drawers that holds rhetoric – collides with its figurative meaning, where the chest of drawers is only a figure of speech.

Mechanics collide with artistry in *Peri Bathous*, as was appropriate for the times Pope lived in, which he seems to acknowledge in this section by naming clockmaking as one of the "arts" of the age. While the comparison is clearly meant to be satirical, there is more to it than

just snark, because clockmaking actually was an innovative art form at the time. Additionally, clockmaking was the mechanical foundation for the development of automata – self-operating machines – which in the eighteenth century were constructed to high biomechanical standards for the first time. These automata, especially Vaucanson's digesting duck, were viewed as active experiments meant to discover the line between mechanism and life. They might, however, be understood more accurately as the automaton creator's experiment into how far he can imitate nature, a project carried on by poets too, under the name *mimesis*. In many ways, Pope's take on the mechanical nature of rhetoric in *Peri Bathous* responds to the same question: how far can the mechanics of writing go in imitating good writing?

By understanding the issues of mechanicity in *Peri Bathous* as analogous to the issues implicit in Vaucanson's digesting duck, we can see that Pope was concerned about the status of imitation at a time when imitations were particularly tricky to identify and understand. This is no new insight: Hugh Kenner identifies it as the "historical comedy" of *counterfeiting*, the apotheosis of which is the counterfeit of man as a rational creature, a story which he observes most copiously in eighteenth-century satire like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.[76] Needless to say, Pope was already well aware of the problem before twentieth-century critics could get to it. In this piece at least, the kind of counterfeiting he is most worried about are artless imitations, with "artless" having two possible interpretations: either having too few rhetorical standards (not enough art or sense), or not enough originality to differentiate it from the original (plagiarism).

The sensation caused by Vaucanson's unveiling of the digesting duck, flute player, and pipe and tabor player in 1738, led many contemporaries to speculate that the external features and "biomechanical" functions of such ingenious automata might at some point be

[76] Kenner, *The Counterfeiters*.

indistinguishable from the organic originals. Jessica Riskin's history of Vaucanson's duck, and the intellectual stakes it represented, can be viewed as a tale of two birds. In the seventeenth-century "clockwork amusements such as de Caus's birds" imitated "only external behavior and not inner function…. Automaton makers confined their efforts to reproducing animals' outward behaviors for artistic purposes."[77] Before the eighteenth century, automata were explicit imitations, but Vaucanson's duck threatened to upend that order by making it more difficult to distinguish between the real and the fake.

The duck generated such interest because Vaucanson said that its digestive process was "'copied from Nature' with food digested 'as in real Animals, by Dissolution… But this,' he added, 'I shall shew… [on] another Occasion.'" It seems that people took him at his word, at first. While there were questions about the authenticity of the duck's innards, it took 45 years before anyone definitively proved that the duck did not digest at all. They did so by noting that the brief pause between the duck swallowing the food and excreting the waste would not afford sufficient time for any real, meaningful dissolution, and thus that original input and output were unconnected. Indeed, the excrement was pre-loaded into the tail end of the duck.[78] Similarly, Pope observes with alarm and amusement, the rapidity and prolificness of hack writers whose "speed and dispatch" is the fruit of the mechanical innovation of the rhetorical chest of drawers. In this comparison Pope is the attentive observer who realizes that the timing does not add up, and that any claim that there is a system (whether organic, mechanical, or rhetorical) that is meaningfully transforming the original matter has to be nonsense. In comparison to the rhetorical chest-of-drawers' utter reductiveness, digestion doesn't seem half bad – a further clue to how we

[77] Riskin, "The Defecating Duck, or, the Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life," 627. Note 58.
[78] Riskin, 608–9. The quote from Vaucanson comes from Jacques Vaucanson, "Letter to the Abbé Desfontaines" (1742 [1738]), *Le Mécanisme du fluteur automate*, trans. J.T. Desguliers (Buren, The Netherlands, 1979), 21.

should interpret Pope's repeated ambivalence towards the possibility of digestive transformation. While digestion usually connotes a degrading process, it also can signify progress and animation, or a logical link connecting an output to an original object.

It is easy to fix on an interpretation of Pope's digestion that focuses on his unambiguous treatment of excremental objects; however, it is the process that creates the excrement that seems to interest him more – and is more challenging to interpret. By shifting our focus from product to process, we can recognize that Pope's project in his scatological satires was much larger than merely naming and shaming those writers whom he thought were dealing in excrement. They are also satires of the conditions, context, and incentives under which English literature was being produced in the early eighteenth century. Riskin reads the digesting duck as negotiating a similarly ambivalent position. She disagrees with Daniel Cottom, who in his evocatively titled article, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Digestion," where he discusses the intellectual context of and meaning of Vaucanson's duck, concluding, "In the age of mechanical digestion, one of the central problems of aesthetic judgement must be to distinguish between art and shit – a problem that still presses upon us in the twentieth century."[79] Admittedly, that is a legitimate aesthetic inquiry, particularly today when there are some works, like Wim Delvoye's *Cloaca* installations, which are simply machines that produce feces and so where that line between art and shit is not so clear – and intentionally so. However, in his satires Pope makes it his business to make the line between art and shit abundantly clear to his readers. While it is certainly an issue at stake in his work, the ultimate designation of what is art and what is shit is not up for debate.

[79] Cottom, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Digestion," 71.

Riskin, on the other hand, gets to an important ambiguity for interpreting the duck that I think also speaks to the mechanics at work in *Peri Bathous*.

> It seems to me, on the contrary, that the automata expressed, not mechanist conviction, but the tug-of-war between such conviction and its antithesis. By building a machine that played the flute and another that shat, and placing them alongside each other, Vaucanson, rather than demonstrating the equivalence of art and shit as the products of mechanical processes, was testing the capacity of each, the artistic and the organic product, to distinguish the creatures that produced them from machines. In other words, I find the most striking feature of Vaucanson's automata to have been their simultaneous enactment of both the sameness and the incomparability of life and machinery.[80]

While it is easy to conclude that the duck and Pope's scatological satire both boil down to the problem of aesthetic judgment, that is only part of the problem. As Riskin detects, the larger issue is in how both are in fact testing the limits of the mechanical mode; in both, the mechanical mode succeeds, but only up to a point. The duck was indeed an extraordinary automaton that successfully imitated a duck in many ways. The failure of it to chemically digest did not make it a failure, it simply showed the limits of its mechanics. Likewise, Pope's own practice shows that he sees value in imitation, and even in some quasi-mechanical methods of literary production, like hiring translators to assist in his Homeric translations. However, his practice also shows what he considers to be the limits of imitative and mechanical methods: they need an additional animating force which only comes from his peculiar poetic genius.

[80] Riskin, "The Defecating Duck, or, the Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life," 610.

DIGESTING DONNE

Pope's versification of Donne's second satire is an excellent test case for the limits of literary digestion and the purpose of imitation, which here is designated "versification." Again, Pope shows that the work of imitation is of ambiguous intrinsic value; it depends entirely on how it is practiced. For instance, in *The Dunciad*,

> Avaunt – is Aristarchus yet unknown?
> Thy mighty Scholiast, whose unweary'd pains
> Made Horace dull, and humbled Milton's strains.
> Turn what they will to Verse, their toil is vain,
> Critics like me shall make it Prose again. (IV. 210 – 214)

Scriblerus's footnote identifies Aristarchus as "A famous Commentator [Aristarchus of Samothrace, d. 150 B.C.], and Corrector of Homer, whose name has been frequently used to signify a complete critic." The idea of correcting Homer, whose name and works are synonymous with "Nature" so often with Pope, is of course a farce. A complete critic unfortunately is not wearied by his pains, turning Horace's and Milton's verse into dull and humble prose. Pope associates both the critic's prose and the poet's verse with hard work – the poet's toil and the critic who takes pains – and shows that their work is pitted against each other in both directions. The critic makes it "Prose *again*," suggesting a cycle of conversion rather than a unilateral conversion of poetry into prose. This cycle levels the poet with the critic, ridiculing versification as a labor, and recalling the assembly line of rhetorical productions coming out of the rhetorical chest of drawers in *Peri Bathous*. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by this critique of the poet in a chapter of *The Dunciad* that starts with a description of "stript, fair

Rhet'ric on the ground," where rhetoric's traditional "ornaments" have been stolen and misappropriated by the dunces. In this satire about the triumph of the goddess Dulness, the critic has the superior stamina and the poet's "toil is in vain." However, over the course of his career, Pope positions himself as a poet of superior stamina in re-versifying older works back into contemporary poetic currency. Bogel suggests that this tension in the duality of the figure of the poet is typical of Pope, as a poet is a "complex and dialectical figure who binds and turns to significance powers that would, if they were simply released *or simply annihilated*, destroy the structure of meaning – and the very possibility of meaning – that he continually works to create."[81] As implicated in the obverse of what he critiques, Pope seems to consider his work an amplification of the original, rather than a dulling or a humbling, which agrees with Bogel's assessment of how the poet turns powers (of dullness, chaos, and unmeaning) to significance.

Pope's versification of Donne's "Satire II" is a particularly rich example of the work of imitation because it is doubled. It is Pope's reflection of Donne's interpretation of an original satire done in the style of Juvenal. What's more, most scholars interpret Donne's poem as a critique of imitation, making Pope's imitation of a *critique* of imitation all the more complex to interpret. Thomas Carew's "An Elegy on the Death of the Dean of Paul's, Dr. John Donne" is a contemporary interpretation that stakes out Donne as anti-*imitatio*. His elegy claims that Donne threw away "the lazy seeds / Of servile imitation" and "fresh invention planted" (ll. 27 – 28). To bolster that assessment, one might observe how Donne did not translate the Roman satirists, but rather created his own satires in their style. For instance, the invective which opens "Satire II" is the hallmark of Juvenal's satire. And a modern scholar like Greene further demonstrates how

[81] Bogel, "Dulness Unbound," 853.

Donne's imitation expresses "hostility toward the pressure to imitate," particularly in his use of the digestive metaphor,

> But hee is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
> Others wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw
> Rankly digested, doth those things out-spue,
> As his owne things…

Greene acknowledges that as an iconoclast, Donne's jibes "tend to betray respect," but at the same time, he argues that Donne is also clearly expressing "a humanist will *not* to absorb, a sophisticated, refined fear or antagonism toward the buried, gigantic remains." This resistance, in turn, is a measure of "the positive force of the imitative impulse, an impulse which was able to come to terms with this resistance."[82] Donne clearly had complicated feelings about the art of imitation, and the digestive metaphor shows that, similarly to what we have seen in Pope's work so far, his critiques seem to hinge on how good an imitation is. The grossness of the digestion comes from the rankness of the digestion and the out-spewing of the remains. However, the worst sin of all, culminating the escalation of disgust in the lines, is the deceit of calling the mess his own; Donne's critique seems less about imitation than plagiarism. This is reinforced by the particulars of the metaphor, where the ravenousness and spewing create some ambiguity about whether the "maw" is the offender's stomach or his jaw. That is, plagiarism becomes more clearly the issue being discussed when the digestive metaphor for imitation is incomplete – if the offender only chewed up but never incorporated the other wit's fruits.

Artful incorporation is at the heart of Pope's imitative projects. He is both incorporating a literary tradition within his own poetry and incorporating his art into the canon by versifying

[82] Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 43–44.

others' works in his own style. As he rewrites and publishes both Horace's and Donnes' satires, he places himself in a poetic lineage, clarifying on his title page that they are imitations of Horace (furthering the link between translation and imitation), and versifications of Donne. This lineage for his imitations is all the more important as it places him in a tradition of skepticism towards imitation, at least as far as Donne was concerned. Donne wrote original satires that imitated a style more than content. There are critics who consider Pope's imitations of Horace to be similarly inventive, for instance this assessment by Aubrey Williams: "Falling somewhere in between translation and original creation, his Imitations seem to be poems in their own right and to have their own autonomy"[83] Yet Pope's versifications of Donne's satire can also read as some of his least original work because he hardly alters any content, only the style. John Sitter argues that Pope's versifications are "refinements" which "bring grammar and versification together, treating the couplet as a syntactic unit," the overall effect of which was poetic "ease." He excerpts syntactically complex lines from Donne's satires which make use of several different images for analogies in a single stanza, concluding, "All this would have been difficult enough [to read] in the late seventeenth century; by the early eighteenth century it was growing hopelessly obscure."[84] As noted earlier, Pope believed that the English language was changing rapidly enough that works less than two hundred years old were becoming unintelligible. Pope's versification of Donne was at least in part an attempt to preserve his writing, albeit in a new form – his own verses – which he considered to be more durable. However, a close reading also shows how style imparts meaning to substance, and vice versa, such that there are very interesting differences between Donne's satire and Pope's imitation of it.

[83] Williams, *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, xix.
[84] Sitter, "Pope's Versification and Voice," 39–40.

Ironically for a reader today, Donne's poem might be the clearer of the two, particularly in his digestive description of the plagiarist masquerading as an imitator.

> But he is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
> Others' wits' fruits, and in his ravenous maw
> Rankly digested, doth those things out-spew,
> As his own things; and they're his own, 'tis true;
> For if one eat my meat, though it be known
> The meat was mine, th' excrement is his own. (l. 25-30)[85]

Donne's lines read fluidly and easily, like Renaissance English barroom banter (or a modern day spoken word artist), and he is explicit in all parts of his metaphor of the plagiarist as eater of another's words/meat, naming the logical end result – meat digests into excrement. Here, on the other hand, is Pope's "The Second Satire of Dr John Donne":

> Wretched indeed! but far more wretched yet
> Is he who makes his meal on others wit:
> 'Tis chang'd, no doubt, from what it was before,
> His rank digestion makes it wit no more:
> Sense, past thro him, no longer is the same;
> For food digested takes another name. (l. 29-34)[86]

While I'm certainly not suggesting that he is the witless plagiarist of Horace and Donne, Pope's translation from Renaissance to Georgian English might be said to digest Donne for a new audience. Far more elliptical than Donne ("food digested takes another name"), Pope un-names

[85] Donne, *Poems, by J.D. VVith Elegies on the Authors Death.*
[86] Pope, *Satires of Dr. John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's. Done into Modern English by Mr. Pope.*

what had been previously explicit: excrement. He also does away with the potentially objectionable orifice ("maw") and action ("out-spew"). His version both protects the polite reader from unsavory explicitness and asks the reader to make more of the connections herself in the suggestiveness of the line, "For food digested takes another name." It is a move that playfully implicates the reader in imagining excrement while obeying the rules of politeness not to name it. Paradoxically, Pope's imitation of Donne's line asks the reader to fill in the original word – excrement – which recreates the original text in the reader's mind even while it maintains its distance from the original on the page with different words, syntax, and rhythm. Quintero has argued that Pope "creatively refashions" "[t]raditional topics, patterns of arrangement, and figures and tropes" that "have garnered a forcefulness through repeated and successful use" to build a "common ground for a community of readers to begin that precarious act of communication."[87] That is what Pope seems to be doing in this un-naming of the digestive metaphor which seems to give the reader a personal stake in the digestive metaphor as she re-names it, and even in how the line provides readers with an in-joke.

Possessiveness and responsibility also change in Pope's versification of Donne, making this section less personal and more theoretical than the original. Donne personalizes the description of imitation / plagiarism at the end, emphasizing "*my* meat," repeating on the next line that the "meat is mine." Pope, however, leaves the original food unclaimed, which in turn makes the scenario sound less about a theft than a crime against sense. While Donne's digestive metaphor seems to taunt a specific transgressor, warning him against plagiarizing his works, Pope's digestive metaphor seems more theoretically-minded. He spends less time designating "his" versus "mine," and more time tracing the course and dynamics of the "rank digestion" of

[87] Quintero, *Literate Culture*, 14.

"others wit," as if he were more interested in how exactly the wit becomes transformed into excrement than in the theft of the wit in the first place.

The metaphorical status of the digestion seems emphasized in Pope as compared to Donne as well, as the original object is repeated twice to be "wit," whereas in Donne the metaphor is more insistent and literal. The original object is described first as "fruits" and then twice as "meat," and the digestive metaphor concludes logically and literally with excrement. In fact, Pope's versification undoes the metaphor and turns digestion into a simile,

> Sense, past thro him, no longer is the same;
> For food digested takes another name.

The semicolon functions here as a "like" or "as," connecting the two lines of couplet as parallel statements forming that simile. In the first line the subject is "sense" which is "past thro him," resulting in it being "no longer... the same." The second line says the exact same thing, but in the symbolic language of digestion: "food" replaces "sense," "digested" replaces "past thro," and "another name" replaces "no longer is the same." The parallel meaning in this extended simile is reinforced by the end rhyme. By choosing a digestive simile over a metaphor, Pope chooses the less insistent trope – Ricoeur argues that the "most intimate and ultimate abode" of metaphor is "the copula of the verb *to be*" – whereas a simile only can suggest a tentative comparison because it rests on the comparison words "like" or "as."[88] By lessening the insistence of the digestive metaphor, Pope uses the force of rhetoric to open up space in its interpretation. Imitation (and plagiarism) no longer *is* digestion, it is merely *like*. Likewise, a digested text no longer *is* excrement, it only "takes another name."

[88] Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Introduction to Study 7.

All this is to say that Pope's versification ultimately reveals a more positive position toward imitation than Donne, even as it engages in a classic critique of it. It evinces also an appreciation for the ambivalence contained in a metaphor about digestion – that it need not always lead directly to waste, but might actually produce more names for the reader to imagine and interpret. Pope, like Donne, sets this digestive metaphor within the context of the satire's opening complaint about the plight of starving writers. But while Donne is willing to fight any theft by those who starve, implying that they deserve what they get, the complaint seems more deeply felt in Pope's version, for instance in his character of the "lean Bard, whose wit could never give Himself a dinner" yet who schemes to save the life of the actor. Donne has the same scenario, yet Pope lingers on it longer and clears up Donne's syntax to ensure the reader understands the sacrifice of the poet's wit for another's gain. Pope makes explicit the poet's inability to make a living – or even earn enough for a meal. This context might explain his leniency in the ensuing stanza about the digested plagiarism. Pope evinces a consistent preoccupation with how market conditions affect literature and the people who produce it (including himself).

CONCLUSION

By paying sustained attention to Pope's use of the digestive metaphor, we uncover a trove of suggestive contradictions. A metaphor with a long history in connection to the rhetorical practice of *imitatio*, Pope uses it to place himself in a literary genealogy of writers like Petrarch, Bacon, and Donne, who also use the metaphor as a positive description of how a poet incorporates a classical literary education into their whole being such that it emerges

spontaneously in their work – that being the basis for future, legitimate imitations. But Donne and Pope also use the metaphor as a negative description of indiscriminate, thieving consumption which leads to plagiarized excrement. Pope wrote imitations even though they were no longer in vogue, a choice which reveals a lingering allegiance to a classical education in rhetoric, but also an entrepreneurial cunning in how he discovered his most lucrative market of readers for his "translations" of Homer. Paradoxically, it was through imitating that Pope became financially independent such that he could write something more daringly original without additional external demands or constraint and focus on literary projects that he thought would endure the test of time – yet he continued to practice the precepts of imitation. He is fairly heroic as the first writer in English to fully support himself, yet with his personal inconsistencies around working for money and the use of hired labor for his translations, sometimes "he emerges as … a bathetic figure, driven by a restless desire for repose and striving to be effortless."[89] Despite his effort to appear above the commercial fracas of the book trade, two of his greatest satires, *The Dunciad* and *Peri Bathous*, delve deeply into its dynamics and implications.

This chapter has focused mainly on *Peri Bathous*, also an imitation: Longinus's *Peri Hypsous* is the original, serious art of poetry. However, Pope reveals in a letter that he is also serious (sometimes) in *Peri Bathous*, but one cannot simply "read [it] in reverse."[90] As Bogel argues, *Peri Bathous* "is not simply parodying Longinus or elaborating his negative image but supplying the modern, mediocre, commercial counterpart of the Greek Theorist – 'our Longinus.'"[91] This commercial counterpart draws out the digestive metaphor in all its luxurious, literal detail in a lengthy consideration of the effect of writing explicitly for the literary

[89] Bell, "Not Lucre's Madman: Pope, Money, and Independence," 65.
[90] Pope and Steeves, *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, lxiv.
[91] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 221.

marketplace's increasingly voracious appetite, considering mechanized modes of literary digestion against endlessly duplicative recipes for epic poems with rehashed ingredients. Perhaps the greatest argument for the generative power contained in the digestive metaphor is how *Peri Bathous* is such a vibrant, interpretively complex play on the possibilities contained in rhetoric even as it explicitly focuses on the excrement produced. Written at a time when classical rhetoric was less admired and studied than ever before, it offers a model for how the study of rhetoric and poetics might evolve in our ever-more mechanized, mindless consuming and waste – and the crucial work of satire in exploring and helping us to understand those ambivalences. In digestion as with interpreting satire, the original object becomes a messy amalgamation only to undergo an invisible force of order, separating the excrement from the art. Finally, Pope's imitation of Donne's imitation of Horace's satire is on its face an odd project of "translating" a poem from the last century, in the same language. Yet it proves a final test case of Pope's digestive metaphor, and not only as a miniature of the preceding argument, but also in how it shows Pope making use of rhetoric to open space for that ambivalent interpretation. But also, when the poem which un-names excrement while relying on the reader to re-name it provides a very interesting moment in which collaborative reading might take place both within Pope's poem, as well as across Donne's. Collaborative reading is not only suggested but encouraged. On the other hand, collaborative writing remains very tricky to pull off, as witnessed by Pope's much-critiqued imitations, none of which attracted more vitriol than his collaborative imitation of Homer with assistant translators. Literary collaborations, as Pope, Swift, and the rest of the Scriblerus Club would tell us, are notoriously hard to pull off successfully. But it is interesting to see Pope attempt it in the face of criticism and contradiction.

Tom Jones and a Hermeneutic of Appetite

The title of *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, suggests that both the protagonist and the novel are orphaned, setting the initial problem that is solved by the end when, as I will show, Tom not only finds his family but the novel also finds its community of readers. With its intricate plot, characters with often-allegorical names, and convenient twist ending, it is a seductive book to interpret; its conspicuous architecture suggests that Fielding was as eager for meaning and ideologies to emerge from his story as readers and scholars still are to find them. Despite the great interpretive possibilities in the novel, though, its narrator has an evident distaste for the literary interpreter, dubbing him[92] "a little Reptile" (X.i.459), and taunting the "pitiful Critic… to mind their own Business and not to intermeddle with Affairs, or Works which no ways concern them" (I.ii.39).[93] Yet it is precisely the critic's business to get involved in the reading and interpretation of a novel like *Tom Jones*, and later on the narrator tacitly acknowledges the fact, giving his hypothetical critic instructions on how to interpret the same way he gives his readers instructions how to read and appreciate: "we warn thee not too hastily to condemn any of the Incidents in this our History, as impertinent and foreign to our main Design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what Manner such Incident may conduce to that Design" (X.i.459). This is much the same advice he gives again in the first chapter of Book XI. Search for the underlying pattern in the book – the narrator says – and instead of

[92] Although there were some "hers" as well in the eighteenth century, Fielding's own cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, being a prominent example. In her honor, and to differentiate the implied reader readily from the clearly masculine narrator, I will refer to the critic whom Fielding addresses with the feminine pronoun even though in this particular section Fielding uses the masculine form.

[93] Fielding, Keymer, and Wakely, *The History of Tom Jones*.
Note: I will cite all page numbers for quotations from *Tom Jones* in-text. The first, capitalized Roman numeral stands for the book, the second lower-case numerals stand for the chapter, and the Arabic numeral for the page number in my edition.

judging the novel piecemeal, see what it achieves as a whole. Taking Fielding's narrator's advice at face value, I would suggest a single, driving motivation for the whole of the novel, its characters, plot and overall structure, as well as the reaction of its reader: appetite.

The word "appetite" appears thirty-eight times in *Tom Jones*, which does not seem overly much for nearly nine hundred pages. Described alternately as "languid," "keen," "carnal," "good," "debauched," and "natural," the one consistency in Fielding's description of appetite is the necessity of satisfying it. Yet this variation is key to its importance; whether literal or figurative, appetite in its myriad forms directs both the novel's conventional marriage plot and the plot of its interpretation that takes place internally, in the narrator's asides to the reader. Taken together, they form a hermeneutic of appetite that highlights several interwoven dynamics in the novel: the narrator's numerous asides to the reader that explicitly solicit the reader's appetite for his novel, appetite's effect on individual characters, and the plot of the novel. And since Fielding uses culinary tropes so often, the theme of appetite is not only metaphorical in its reference to various desires, but also appears literally in how important scenes in the novel take place so often around a meal.

Ultimately, *Tom Jones* can be read as a novel of appetite fulfilled, and this chapter shows how that manifests in this novel in a community of readers that extends beyond the cast of characters to include the character of the implied reader whom the narrator addresses throughout the novel, who are all finally united into an interpretive community. The plot moves forward as characters – the implied reader included – are prompted by their various appetites as well as their judgments, which either arrest or permit those appetites. These characterizations perform modes of judgment for the dramatic audience, and they are shown often to be connected with bodily, sensuous, or otherwise instinctive ways of knowing, especially when they are more correct than

not. In the end, a portrait emerges not only of Tom and his parentage, but also of how a reader might consume a novel. The implied reader arrives along with Tom, his friends, and family, at a full understanding, or "wisdom," at the end of the novel where she can finally appreciate the necessity of the narrator's gaps, asides, and tangents. She should be led by genuine appetite to be sure, but the bill of fare turns out to be only a ruse to pique interest as she is unequivocally directed to enjoy the whole narrative as presented, excrescences and all, to be rewarded at the end of the novel similarly to how Tom is rewarded, in return for satisfying not just one or two but *all* appetites. Thus, Fielding also stakes out how the long and unwieldy form of a novel might necessarily contain parts that are less deliciously interesting than others, but that they are not problems with, but rather still integral to, the successful plot – and how none of them should be neglected or avoided in order for the success of his hermeneutic of appetite.

THE BILL OF FARE: COOKING IT UP AND COLLISIONS WITH COMMERCE

Good writing as good cooking and good reading as copious eating with good appetite: these are the physical analogies through which Fielding directs *Tom Jones* from his opening chapter. These analogies animate the whole novel yet they have hardly ever been studied in depth and as a single, continuous, directing metaphor, which seems a mistake since the novel from the start designates its readers as diners at its table. Scenes of eating also tend to harbor pivotal plot points where some characters know more than others, such as Allworthy's presentation of the infant Tom to Bridget over breakfast, Tom's appetitive blindness at the Upton Inn, and the final wedding breakfast. Selective withholding is also the basis of the narrator's authority and his relationship to the implied reader he addresses throughout, a tactic meant to

capture and hold that reader's appetitive attention, as he suggests in this opening chapter. Fielding shows that his characters, the narrator's implied reader, and perhaps the narrator too are all driven primarily by their appetites, for good and ill. This is not to say, though, that Fielding's eating analogy has been ignored. Its prominence would hardly allow such an oversight. Rather, scholars have alternately treated it too literally, neglecting cookery's relationship to rhetoric, studied it piecemeal, or treated it as always ironic, never meaningful, as, for example, in this representative analysis by Bliss: "the provision is human nature – as found in its natural, wild state – and the dressing of ornament is simply an ironic comment in another direction."[94] Rather than accept such a stark division between substance and ornament, plot and intrusions by the narrator, I will insist instead on how the cookery metaphor on the one hand emphasizes how substance is inextricable from its treatment, and the eating analogy on the other hand reveals the intricacies of the relationship between the narrator and reader as well as the narrator's anxiety and efforts to form his ideal reader through his numerous narratorial asides.

Fielding's writing-as-cooking metaphor is complexly ironic, even in how the title of this first chapter plays on a tired commonplace, the "Bill of fare to the feast." Four decades earlier Swift's narrator in *A Tale of a Tub* had denounced the trope as 'that pernicious Custom, of making the Preface a Bill of Fare to the Book' (sect. v). Fielding also had used the trope in his

[94] Bliss, "Fielding's Bill of Fare in Tom Jones," 239. Probably the most comprehensive treatment of the eating analogy so far has come from Timothy O'Brien. However, while he performs several intriguing close-readings, he ultimately lands on a surprisingly literal-minded overall reading, concluding that the narrator was hungry while he wrote. O'Brien, "The Hungry Author and Narrative Performance in Tom Jones." While it's true that Fielding often literalizes his appetitive metaphors through scenes of eating, I believe they are meant to make the reader think about its metaphorical, not literal, implications more deeply. I take my interpretive cue from Coleridge, who distinguishes a physical and literal taste and an aesthetic taste, where the word is used more metaphorically: "if in [a reader's] feelings a taste *for* Milton is essentially the same as a taste *of* mutton, he may still be a sensible and valuable member of society; but it would be a desecration to argue with him on the Fine Arts." Coleridge, "On the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts," 367. Henry Power has also written an excellent article on appetite, consumption, and forms of reading in Fielding, focusing on its break from classical epic standards, where my only quibble in how thoroughly he equates Fielding with the narrator. Power, "Henry Fielding, Richard Bentley, and the 'Sagacious Reader' of 'Tom Jones.'"

earlier comedy, *Don Quixote in England*, in which the author-figure refuses to justify his play in a prologue: "But of what real Use is a Bill of Fare to any Entertainment, where the Guests are not left to their Choice what Part they will pick at, but are oblig'd to swallow the Whole indifferently?"[95] Critics of rhetorical flourishes, such as the Ramist heirs of Plato who were formational for the literary culture of Fielding's England, often decried how the power of rhetoric may force ideas on listeners and readers that they might otherwise resist and reject. In *Don Quixote in England*, Fielding describes a bill of fare as a type of rhetoric: a way to make reader-spectator-guests "oblig'd to swallow the Whole indifferently." Reusing the trope of a bill of fare in *Tom Jones*, another work which realistically cannot be consumed piecemeal but only entire and whole, threatens the reader with forced feeding and reasserts the narrator's power.

A reading of Fielding's culinary metaphor is also far from straightforward from a point of view of long-held literary conventions, as Power notes that in classical times "the representation of literary works as food was a particularly savage violation of decorum," which he sees as deriving from "a desire to regard the act of reading as purely intellectual, acorporeal, and hence objective."[96] This might be slightly overstating it as there are countless non-satirical examples of reading described in corporeal terms from classical times through to the eighteenth-century, for example, the frequent use of the term *sagacity* to indicate deep knowing but which, as Powers also notes, also indicates a sense of smell, or the longstanding metaphor of digestion for *imitatio*, which I discuss in detail in this dissertation's chapter on Pope. However, it is certainly true that Fielding portrays eating scenes and metaphors of cookery self-consciously in *Tom Jones*, with an eye to how mere cooking is Plato's slur in *Gorgias* – cooking being the deceit of disguising

[95] Note 1 to Book 1, Chapter 1 in Fielding, Keymer, and Wakely, *The History of Tom Jones*, 883–84.
[96] Power, "Henry Fielding, Richard Bentley, and the 'Sagacious Reader' of 'Tom Jones,'" 766.

inferior ingredients, which has a moral undertone in how it can make bad ingredients taste good and hence "the worse appear the better cause."[97]

Richetti reads the entire motif of gourmandism in *Tom Jones* as purely negative in value, with which I don't agree, but both he and Volk-Birke make good points in locating a more contemporaneous critique of cookery (in particular French gourmandizing) with a "John Bullish" attitude favoring "simple straightforward English style dishes" over "artistry and style in the preparation" with "prestigious ingredients, which distinguish the expert cook as well as the learned and discriminating reader."[98] In this novel the cookery metaphor originates from the narrator's invoked muse for print: a "much plumper dame, whom no airy Forms nor Phantoms of Imagination clothe: Whom the well-seasoned beef, and Pudding richly stained with Plumbs delight" (XII.iv.613). She is the Grubstreet-educated daughter of a "fat Ufrow Gelt" – which seems to be (quite appropriately for the subject) bastardized Dutch for (unmarried) mistress gold – whom Fielding unites in an "ill yoked Pair" with "a jolly Merchant of Amsterdam" (ibid). In *Tom Jones,* cookery is not only a classically-inspired critique of rhetoric's power, but also of the necessity of writing for money. While the beef and plum pudding are typical indicators of English tastes, the classical invocation of the muse of epic poetry, Calliope, and lineage of his own, contemporary muse from the marketplaces of Amsterdam shows that while Grubstreet cynical commercialism may be a particularly English literary problem, Fielding wishes to engage with historical and contemporary literary concerns on a broader scale.

Fielding's treatment of cooking and eating metaphors also gains meaning from understanding his contemporary context, where the nature of the food on the table indicated class

[97] Richetti, "Ideology and Literary Form in Fielding's Tom Jones," 42.
[98] Volk-Birke, "Questions of Taste: The Critic as Connoisseur and the Hungry Reader," 182.

difference, as evidenced by the proliferation of cookbooks in that century that for the first time catered to a middle-class who were interested in imitating the dining habits of the gentry.[99] The way food served as a class marker at the time meant that some consumers were more concerned with the image rather than healthfulness of their food, as was the case with the rage for white bread in the eighteenth century. Both more expensive and less healthy than breads that used the whole kernel of wheat, some bakers imitated refined, white flour by baking their bread with chalk and other harmful, whitening powders, which caused some deaths but also wider malnutrition. In *Tom Jones,* the narrator negotiates these ill effects of false appearances by focusing on the substance first, and then the form. He goes beyond the aristocratic markers of the delicacies calibash and calipee, instead asking democratically, "Where then lies the Difference between the Food of the Nobleman and the Porter, if both are at Dinner on the same Ox or Calf, but in the seasoning, the dressing, the garnishing, and the setting forth?" (I.i.36) This protestation seems to put the initial goodness of the material the main object, rather than the skill of the cook. However, it is a disingenuous protestation coming from a narrator who boasts in the same chapter of his skill matching Heliogabalus's. Clearly, the skills of a great chef can make a great deal of difference on the same piece of meat, whether roasted plain in the English style or highly spiced in a French *ragoo*.[100]

One of the ways Fielding's narrator demonstrates his master-cookery is in what Schmidt praises as Fielding's "coherence of metaphor."[101] The opening chapter self-consciously explores

[99] Lehmann, *The British Housewife*.
[100] Glenn Hatfield claims that Fielding privileges plain language through his mocking and ironical use of rhetorical flourishes. However I am not so sure that this is Fielding's position because of the persistent, insistent "excess" represented by the narrator's intrusions and rhetorical flourishes, and his conspicuous preference for culinary metaphors even as they take on an ironic edge. Fielding embeds a rhetoric of cookery so thoroughly within his novel that it seems he would want his reader to take it at least somewhat seriously, some of the time. Hatfield, *Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony*.
[101] Schmidt, *The Novel*, 138.

the dynamics contained within that single, coherent gustatory metaphor: what happens when the narrator becomes a cook for a marketplace of paying patrons.

> But the whole, to continue the same Metaphor, consists in the Cookery of the Author; for, as Mr. *Pope* tells us,
>
> True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,
>
> What oft' was thought, but ne'er so well exprest. (I.i.36)

Already in this opening chapter, the "Cookery of the Author," which turns any substance into palatable wit, is simply a variation on the keeper of the public ordinary who delivers what his paying customers want. It is tricky to figure out where exactly that "same Metaphor" begins and ends, partly because Fielding does not specify the beginning of his metaphor. However, the difficulty also stems from how he uses *metaphor* not in Ricoeur's sense of a concise substitution of ideas underpinned by the theoretical logic of the verb *to be*. Rather, Fielding's "metaphor" resembles allegory in the sense that meaning unravels by and through narrative. While one might argue that the metaphor is circumscribed within this first chapter where it is made so explicit, as I read it, it should actually be read as beginning with the first line of *Tom Jones*, and it does not end until the final chapter when the newly married Tom and Sophia gather around a breakfast table to feast with their friends. The reference to the metaphor here being the "same" even though the beginning point of the metaphor is obscure, demonstrates the kinds of connections that Fielding and his narrator expect the reader to make, and suggests that the comparison between good eating and good reading continues throughout the novel, in varying forms.

However, this declared coherence of metaphor is undermined at the same time that it is performed. As Hunter has said so well, a good bit of the comedy in Fielding's narrator's reference to Pope's famous line "lies in the pace of the passage so that a reader can slide quickly

past before quite realizing that Pope's couplet is as comfortable in Fielding's cooking metaphor as a formal dancer would be in a pile of sausages."[102] I would add that there is a similar discomfort if the reader reflects on how the narrator uses the broad designation of "metaphor" to signify the complicated rhetorical acrobatics in this chapter. It is initially plausible at the same time that it is too totalizing, much like the narrator's attempts to direct his implied reader. Yet, as seen here, the narrator is able to manipulate readers by the quickness and force of direct comparison as represented by the form of metaphor, to swallow and then keep moving on, to follow at the narrator's own lively pace, and to ignore narrative gaps and readerly appetites until directed to fill them.

While *metaphor* in this novel already has proven to be an all-encompassing term for Fielding's various analogies, there is one instance in this opening that preserves a narrower definition of metaphor: "The provision then which we have here made is no other than Human Nature" (I.i.36). This is metaphorical enough to be broken down into I.A. Richards' terms, and Fielding's own deconstruction of his metaphor suggests that the tenor of the overarching metaphor is Human Nature. The vehicle, that "provision," which the narrator describes as various kinds of meat, expands into becoming worthy of either the Porter or the Nobleman solely through its "seasoning," "dressing," "garnishing," and "setting forth" (ibid). This is not a subtle metaphor; it comes together heavily, a carnivorous buffet. The narrator's heavy-handedness continues by immediately offering the interpretation for his own metaphor rather than allowing the reader breathing room to come up with her own.

> Hence, the one provokes and incites the most languid Appetite, and the other turns and palls that which is the sharpest and keenest. In like manner, the Excellence of the mental

[102] Hunter, *Before Novels*, 20.

> Entertainment consists less in the Subject, than in the Author's Skill in well dressing it up (I.i.36-7).

His purported point, that the author has control over the reception of his work through narrative skill that can make a reader consume even when she has no appetite, is double edged. Dressing something up to look better than it actually is begins to sound Platonic in its critique of rhetoric as mere cookery – cookery being a disguise for subpar ingredients. But it also, yet again, evokes forced feeding, which when combined with the implication that subpar ingredients are being made palatable for the reader, suggests that the reader is being set up not for good reading, but for a good bellyache. *Tom Jones* is not a book for the squeamish or delicate reader, but rather one who has a strong enough stomach to withstand the trials of so many different courses-cum-chapters. The feast of *Tom Jones* threatens to be an imperfect exchange between the narrator and his customer, but one which the novel investigates thoroughly even as it performs its entertainment.

Ultimately, Fielding's use of the rhetoric-as-cookery motif is a far cry from Plato's skepticism. For one thing, it is never *mere* cookery. Using "the highest Principles of the best Cook," the "Author's Skill in well dressing it up" is claimed to be unparalleled, bound to delight all "Lovers of polite eating." (I.i.37) Even if the author is manipulating the reader through his cookery, the discerning reader will hardly mind, this suggests. Satirically using another classic analogy for rhetoric, clothing, Fielding suggests that the effect of his rhetoric works not to obscure but to strip truth down to its bare essentials: "an example is a kind of picture, in which virtue becomes, as it were, an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness, which Plato asserts there is in her naked charms" (Dedication.5). Fielding threatens to be scandalously clear, following Plato in stripping down Virtue to her naked truth. But if his "polite" readers

would prefer that Virtue kept at least some of her clothes on – or that the meat be cooked – he can oblige. Thus, Fielding repeatedly puts the polite and virtuous reader in the position of wanting rhetoric (lovers of raw meat and naked women aside). He puts the cookery metaphor front and center of *Tom Jones* to explain the novel's purpose, but this explanation threatens to undermine it at the same time. If, as Andrew Wright observed, *Tom Jones* is a feast and the opening chapter produces an image on which "the meaning of the novel depends," it is an image of an author confident in his offerings but wary of its reception, centered on the problem of how to read well.[103]

The implied reader-critic is not only a potentially picky eater, but when she does have appetite, her tastes are often not what the narrator wishes. Thus, the narrator's intrusions act as seasonings to make his fare more palatable to the reader:

> The same Advantages may be drawn from these Chapters, in which the Critic will be always sure of meeting with something that may serve as a whetstone to his noble Spirit; so that he may fall with a more hungry Appetite for censure…And here his Sagacity must make it needless to observe how artfully these Chapters are calculated for that excellent Purpose; for in these we have always taken care to intersperse somewhat of the sour or acid Kind, in order to sharpen and stimulate the said Spirit of Criticism. (XVI.i.737)

The narrator ironically alludes to the critic's censorious appetite, and his ability to heighten it by using the sour and acidic to "sharpen and stimulate" – not literal appetite as the initial phrasing suggests – but the "Spirit of Criticism." This transposition of the "spirit of criticism" where "appetite" would normally go is as close as the narrator gets to naming a hermeneutic of appetite,

[103] Wright, *Henry Fielding, Mask and Feast*, 31.

although here he suggests that it is a natural inclination he would prefer to eradicate in his readers unless he can be sure that their critical appetites are generous.

Threatened by picky eater-readers, the narrator divulges a plan to engage the reader's appetite, perhaps pushing it past its natural limits:

> How pleased therefore will the reader be to find, that we have, in the following Work, adhered closely to one of the highest principles of the best Cook which the present Age, or perhaps that of *Heliogabalus*, hath produced? This great Man, as is well known to all Lovers of polite eating, begins at first by setting plain Things before his hungry Guests, rising afterwards by Degrees, as their Stomachs may be supposed to decrease, to the very Quintessence of Sauce and Spices. In like manner, we shall represent Human Nature at first to the keen Appetite of our Reader, in that more plain and simple Manner in which it is found in the Country, and shall hereafter hash and ragoo it with all the high *French* and *Italian* Seasoning of Affection and Vice which Courts and Cities afford. By these Means, we doubt not but our Reader may be rendered desirous to read on for ever, as the great Person, just above-mentioned, is supposed to have made some Persons eat. (I.i.37)

The narrator describes how his tale will follow a dining principle ostensibly established by the decadent Roman Emperor Heliogabalus, where the first courses sate hunger with the simplest foods and flavors because that is when appetite is least discriminating, then moving on to more complex and dainty flavors in later courses in order to tempt the appetite past the point of hunger. The corollary in the narrative is how the first part takes place in the "plain and simple" countryside, the later chapters in the debauched and cosmopolitan city, and in how the characters and their problems mirror their setting.

Presented as a favor to the reader, particularly those with refined tastes – the Lovers of polite eating – the favor becomes dubious when the irresistible seasonings are revealed to be the French and Italian affectation and vice. Not only does it place the implied reader in the position of being a lover of affectation (as I believe *affection* here might be read given its association with the adjectives *French* and *Italian*) and vice, but the comparison to Heliogabalus also visits on her the threat of forced eating-reading. The last sentence reveals the various aspects of the threat: "our reader may be rendered" unexpectedly places the reader in the position of one of the ingredients in the narrator/chef's frying pan, where she might be rendered like a piece of bacon for the length of the novel over a low flame. The reader is treated as an ingredient like any other in the narrator's novel of a meal. It is only a momentary threat, though, as the sentence continues and the reader turns out to be "rendered desirous." Yet being rendered desirous is hardly less violent to the reader when that desire could be strung along indefinitely until the reader is stuffed to bursting. If it never ends, the reader must burst. With a modern edition containing the whole novel, a reader can measure the physical evidence that the novel will end. However, *Tom Jones* was published in multiple volumes, as was normal for long works at the time, and so the reader could not find the same assurance that there would be a natural limit to what the narrator could entice her to read. The volumes might actually never end. Being rendered desirous also suggests both that appetites can become unnatural, and that unnaturalness is paralleled to the vice of the city rather than the hearty appetites associated with plainness and simplicity in the country – this is the first intimation that appetites in *Tom Jones* are not only amoral but also that appetites will cause problems for reading in this novel since they can be manipulated, at the same time as they offer a single motivation for the plot and structure. Finally, this prefatory chapter asserts the narrator's domination over the reader's ability to pick and choose what to read. What began as a

bill of fare offering choice and variety ends as a promise to keep the reader at the table for as long as the narrator/chef performs.

The opening chapter and its purportedly single metaphor also introduce the major problem pursued throughout the novel, both in the narrator's asides and the plot surrounding Tom: how can appetite be harnessed to produce correct rather than self-interested interpretations? It shows that it is a new problem brought on by the changing literary marketplace, as the narrator establishes from the very start of the novel, in how it establishes an economic exchange between the author and his reader:

> An Author ought to consider himself, not as a Gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary Treat, but rather as one who keeps a public Ordinary, at which all Persons are welcome for their Money (I.i.35).

This opening simile suggests the possibility of a broader reading public for the novel in how "all Persons" are now welcome, as well as the social demotion of author from gentleman to tavern keeper, but most importantly, the context of it being an economic exchange "for their Money" also opens up the author to the unwelcome demand of satisfying capricious, individual tastes. The narrator suggests this is an inevitable byproduct of reading becoming a transaction rather than a proffered treat: "Men who pay for what they eat, will insist on gratifying their Palates, however nice and whimsical these may prove" (ibid). This exchange seems to leave the author and his reader on less friendly terms than ever before. The qualification of readers being welcome for their money could be interpreted as them being welcome *only* for their money. If the reader is now a customer rather than a guest, and the customer is always right, how might an author still influence and inculcate good readerly appetites?

In their histories of the English novel, both Ian Watt and Michael McKeon emphasize how the early English novel "internalizes the emergence of the middle class." The early novel, as a genre, is aware of a new kind of reader, one who has no natural authority such as an aristocratic patron, but one who has the power to choose to buy and read the book, and the stories this new kind of person wishes to read mediates questions of truth and virtue, i.e. more applicable standards and examples than the heroism of past epics. For Fielding, that mediator becomes a middle-class tavern keeper, a narrator who lacks the control that comes from being an independent gentleman who does not have to work for his bread. And as the keeper of the Ordinary, the narrator cedes at least some control to the reader, not least because the monetary exchange puts the author in the reader's debt until their pleasure is gratified. Fielding's novel, then, playfully and begrudgingly opens itself up immediately to a previously unheard-of commerce[104] with the reader, yielding some authority to the reader on the condition that the reader recognize the authority of the narrator on questions of virtue, truth – and perhaps just as importantly – how to read well.

Economic exchange does not make for an easy relationship between author and reader, cook and eater; and critical opinion on that relationship runs the gamut from Wayne Booth describing it as a decreasingly antagonistic relationship to Konigsberg less convincingly calling the narrator the reader's friend.[105] The few moments of explicit friendliness towards the reader should not be read at face value. True, at the beginning the narrator steps out of the sidelines in friendly fashion to take the reader's hand: "let us e'en venture to slide down together; for Miss *Bridget* rings her Bell, and Mr. *Allworthy* is summoned to Breakfast, where I must attend, and, if

[104] "Commerce" is word I use to evoke both the economic exchange described in this initial simile as well as social commerce, which, appropriately for this novel, also has a sexual connotation.
[105] Konigsberg, *Narrative Technique in the English Novel*, 106; Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.

you please, shall be glad of your Company" (I.iv.43-4) But this can equally be read as mere initial politeness, or better yet, with an ironic tone, the narrator emphasizing his power to bring his reader from lofty heights down to earth with a jolt. Even when the narrator compares the reader to his fellow traveler in a stage coach, one notes that they are only cheerful towards each other because the end of the journey is in sight and they know they might be so lucky as to never have to meet more (XVIII.i.812).

In describing his relationship to the implied reader, the narrator's first concern is the threat of the reader's propensity to criticize, or in his words, to "d—n their Dinner without Controul." Continuing the culinary-marketplace metaphor, he proposes to solve the threat of picky readers laying waste to the novel by taking a "Hint from these honest Victuallers" and so provides "Bills of Fare" not only here at the beginning of the novel but also each of the eighteen subsequent books (I.i.35). These literary menus form a major part of the novel, spaces where the narrator interrupts the plot, often to address the reader directly about issues this form, which the narrator declares is a new genre, and its interpretation – which remains the most important problem for both the narrator and the reader from start to finish. As Chibka rightly observes, "We cannot in Fielding's public ordinary order up on plot, well done, hold the intrusion. What some would call garnishes are crucial ingredients."[106] Bogel further observes in relation to Fielding's earlier novel, *Joseph Andrews*, that "Fielding's false clues, jokes, misleading chapter headings, and verisimilitude-demolishing footnotes, to name only the more obvious such devices," are an "effort to maneuver the reader into a critical posture."[107] This observation is equally true for how the narration works in *Tom Jones*. The prefatory chapters and intrusions by

[106] Chibka, "Taking 'The Serious' Seriously," 39.
[107] Bogel, *Acts of Knowledge*, 228.

the narrator are moments where the narrator negotiates his relationship with the reader and teaches her how to interpret. These prefatory chapters are far from optional, which calls into doubt the authority the narrator gives to readers' tastes and whether they actually do have the ability to pick and choose from this feast of a novel as they see fit.

After all, what Fielding scholars agree most on for *Tom Jones* is the centrality of the development of discernment. As Konigsburg notes, "much of the action of the novel [is] concerned with the problem of perception: Tom must learn to perceive others correctly so that he can achieve his just and happy rewards."[108] Likewise, the narrator's self-mockery and irony are a guise "to prod the reader into thinking for himself."[109] And Janes dubs *Tom Jones* as a kind of reader's workout, which seems appropriate for a book with so many physiological references and implications. "Fielding not only lends himself to 'resisting' reading, but he also builds combativeness into his text, providing a sort of 'resistance training' that readers may engage or ignore."[110] However, this power to engage or ignore is only half of the problem. For Spacks, the central issue between the narrator and his implied reader is the "power to control assignments of truth and direct desire," a fuller conception of what's at stake than even Spacks seems to realize.[111] More than just a "troubling power to refuse the feast" being offered, or even the necessity of admitting "the comparative inadequacy of his own conceptions and yield[ing] to the novelist's authority," the physiological references to appetite that frame *Tom Jones* from its start uneasily acknowledge the reader's autonomy, and thus the need for the narrator and his reader to form a partnership.

---

[108] Konigsberg, *Narrative Technique in the English Novel*, 105.
[109] Konigsberg, 112.
[110] Janes, "Fielding and the Case of the Misguided Reader," 169.
[111] Spacks, *Desire and Truth*, 37.

The novel explores the physiological basis of the reader's autonomy to control her own assignments of truth and the directions of her own desire beyond the equation of literary and gustatory appetites. As Kickel has shown in a fascinating study, imagination itself was understood by eighteenth-century Britons to have a physiological basis in every body and as such, "the imagination could now be located everywhere and literally, in everyone," and thus not just the narrator directing the unfolding plot.[112] Fielding's narrator is so interesting precisely because he acknowledges the reader's imaginative autonomy in the same breath as showing how he can still maintain control. For instance, Fielding's narrator seems to cede some of his authority to the reader's imagination such as when Western bursts into the room where Lord Fellamar intends to rape Sophia: "If the Reader's Imagination doth not assist me, I shall never be able to describe the Situation of these two Persons when Western came into the Room." But of course, the narrator does go on immediately to describe the scene, quite ably, from all perspectives. For instance, Sophia "tottered into a Chair, where she sat disordered, pale, breathless, bursting with Indignation at Lord *Fellamar*; affrighted, and yet more rejoiced at the Arrival of her Father" (XV.v.702-3). Despite the initial protestation, the narrator in fact leaves very little to the reader's imagination, and in the same section flaunts his ability to direct the plot: "the Reader in many Histories is obliged to digest much more unaccountable Appearances than this of Mr. *Western*, without any Satisfaction at all." That obligation can be read as both an actual compulsion but also as a duty of politeness, which the narrator returns in how he wants to help the reader avoid dissatisfaction and indigestion: "yet, as we dearly love to oblige him whenever it is in our Power, we shall now proceed to shew by what Methods the Squire discovered where his Daughter was" (XV.vi.707). Despite physiological metaphors suggesting

[112] Kickel, *Novel Notions*, 10.

the reader's agency and autonomy, Fielding's narrator spends much of the novel asserting his control over the reader. However, this is not proof of his ultimate authority but rather his anxiety about how to engage the reader under marketplace conditions where readerly appetites, not standardized aesthetic metrics, will determine his success and endurance. If we take Fielding's bill of fare at all seriously, these moments are merely proof of his cognizance that the only power he has is over *what* his reader consumes; the *if*, *how*, *why*, and *so what* are whole other matters.

The implied reader is subjected to a thorough training, which takes place most explicitly in the narrator's asides but also within the more conventionally understood plot. Watt claims that the novel's "obtrusive patterning," along with the often-allegorical character names and self-conscious reference to his own rhetoric, all invite the reader to "detachment, and thence to conscious assessment."[113] And certainly these overt literary markers make a reader slow down and consider the book in its historical literary lineage rather than simply abandoning themselves into the lives of the characters. But plot and structure are ultimately inextricable, as Martin Battestin has argued, and to be uninterested in one would affect the reading of the other. And, Preston reminds us, a lack of appetite is something that the narrator abhors in his readers: "The book, then, is not concerned with judgments made in detachment and isolation. Shaftesbury's ideal reader, judging 'coolly and with indifference', will, Fielding implies, only be sinking deeper into his own illusions."[114] Paying attention to form with cool detachment is exactly what the narrator accuses critics of, when they mistake "mere Form for Substance. They acted as a Judge would, who should adhere to the lifeless Letter of the Law and reject the spirit" (V.i.188). He finds it an indication of "shallow Capacities" and that the critic in that case ought to be

[113] Watt, "Serious Reflections on 'The Rise of the Novel,'" 215.
[114] Preston, *The Created Self; the Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 123.

considered "no more than the Clerk" who transcribes the rules of great judges. At a minimum he wants invested readers whom he can then mold to his own specifications, and he will do anything in his power to spark the so-often physiologically rendered readerly appetite that will allow him this control.

While "the opening chapter promises to cater to literary appetites of paying customers," in fact "the ensuing narrative aims not only to stimulate but to chastise and educate desire, in both characters and readers."[115] Even though the narrator lacks the dictatory rights which come from offering an "eleemosynary Treat," he keeps strict account of what his reader-diners receive, resulting in a tightly controlled commerce – most of the time. Fielding's ruling analogy makes all of this clear from the start. As an author cooking for picky paying customers, there will always be a tug of war between the reader's and author's tastes, although the one in charge of the kitchen usually wins – at least until appetite is fulfilled. The rest of this chapter will investigate how appetites are connected to modes of judgment, both of which are shown to be insufficient when individual, but which lead to wisdom and conclusive interpretation when communal. While this neat formula captures the prosocial values Fielding prioritizes in his novel, its tidiness does match the inherent nature of appetites, which frequently are overwhelming, undiscriminating, and can lead to overindulgence and waste. Thus, a novel that hinges on its implied reader's and characters' appetites inevitably will result in some overflow and outgrowth from the excess that appetite produces. These excrescences are visible at the level of the plot in the narrator's digressions, in Blifil's wholly unredeemed character, and in the lingering problems that result from a hermeneutic of appetite.

[115] Chibka, "Taking 'The Serious' Seriously," 39.

INSUFFICIENT INDIVIDUAL JUDGMENTS AND ISOLATING APPETITES

Appetites are problematic in *Tom Jones* insofar that they represent an individual, self-interested preoccupation. Notably in a novel that emphasizes the importance of powers of discernment, meals in *Tom Jones* are moments of temporary blindness, significant misjudgment, and, often, misdirection, similar to scenes of eating in the epic Fielding takes so much inspiration from, *The Odyssey*. Individual appetite uncouples observation and understanding, as key moments of obliviousness occur around mealtimes. In the breakfast scene introducing Mr. Allworthy, both he and Mrs. Deborah lack a keenness of observation, despite the narrator's hints that Miss Bridget is behaving unusually. Both have other preoccupations that blind them from the clues in front of their nose – and perhaps in Allworthy's case, this is due to his appetite for breakfast. It is at this breakfast that Allworthy announces his intention to raise the foundling Tom, which sets the plot of the novel in motion. He is blind to his sister Bridget's unusually accommodating reaction, which might have raised his suspicions; perhaps he would have noticed if he already had his morning coffee? Likewise, it is in the Upton Inn kitchen while eating eggs and bacon that Mrs. Honour learns from the indiscreet Partridge that Sophia and she have crossed paths with Tom. She hurries off to inform Sophia – but only after polishing off a second helping. Ironically, given her name, Mrs. Honour's appetite for aiding her mistress is not as strong as her appetite for food. Meanwhile, because of his sexual appetite for Mrs. Waters, Tom is misdirected from his love for Sophia, and she from her love for him. As appetite increases, the reliability of the characters experiencing it decreases, the Upton Inn episode demonstrating this diminishment of reliability occurring in conjunction with large appetites – first always for food, but then sliding into other bodily appetites. This brief rundown of how appetite for food affects

the discernment of the characters in the novel helps to explain the narrator's overarching concern for how a reader's appetite for his plot will affect his understanding of it. Appetite in *Tom Jones* signifies a deficit of judgment or interpretation.

A centralized, top-down mode of judgment doesn't fare well either in this novel, perhaps because it is too individualized, although it is a mode emphasized as the norm from first line, when the narrator declares himself the master and keeper of the "Ordinary." An "ordinary" can refer, on the one hand, to an allotment of food or fixed price meal, and on the other hand, to rules and ordinances, the manuals that contain them, or even the people who have the intrinsic (rather than delegated) authority to arbitrate rules in the ecclesiastical or civil realms (*OED*). The narrator captures both senses of the noun since he both doles out and arbitrates the meal of the plot. Mr. Allworthy and Squire Western also might be understood as "Ordinaries" in this novel since they are both magistrates by right of their gentle birth, and indeed they fulfill an Ordinary's function in how both pass judgments critical to the crisis and subsequent resolution of this novel. Allworthy's judgment sends Tom out of Paradise Hall, which sets both the peripatetic hero and plot in motion but also gives him his final inheritance, and Western first forbids and then allows Sophia to marry Tom. These alternative "Ordinaries" might also be read to represent two strategies of critical judgment offered as models (both serious and facetious at the same time) to the reader-critic: Allworthy's prudential, Christian epicureanism and Western's sagacity, a kind of knowledge associated with an innate sense of smell.

Fielding offers caricatures of interpretive strategies that are often based in some kind of bodily knowledge. Western's sagacity is reborn in Sophia as a wiser intuition, while Allworthy shows the pitfalls of prudence and the promise of a Christian kind of Epicureanism that is most fully embodied by Tom by the end of the novel. Importantly, the novel shows that none of these

individual strategies are sufficient in themselves, and some of them even point to fundamental problems with a model of appetitive reading when appetites may not always be natural nor good. This is most clearly seen in Blifl's counter example but also in the Man of the Hill episode, as I will discuss more fully in the remainder of this chapter. While Western and Allworthy's judgments are shown to be insufficient by themselves, Tom and Sophia seem to inherit and improve on these initial modes of judgment when they marry, which in turn is mirrored in how readers in the novel – and of the novel – are likewise depicted as forming a partnership with the narrator by the end of the novel, forming a community of readers. Through this cast of characters, Fielding builds a hermeneutic of appetite based on sensuous forms of knowledge, which is only fulfilled at Tom and Sophia's wedding feast.

Sagacity is one of the most ironized modes of judgment in this novel – prudence coming in a distant second – and at the heart of its ironic use is the tension between its primary, sensuous definition (*OED*: "acute sense of smell") and its secondary, intellectual sense (*OED*: "acuteness of mental discernment"). The word itself reflects how "imagination and sensory experience were thought of as virtually inseparable from one another in pre-romantic discourse," coming together to form a matrix where "physical, mental, and emotional sensations…were ultimately indistinguishable from one another."[116] Henry Power is the only Fielding scholar to my knowledge who has taken seriously Fielding's epithet, the "sagacious reader," and he does so by connecting it to an infamous eighteenth-century classical scholar, Richard Bentley, and his reputation for disregarding textual evidence in favor of intuitive judgments. Rather than proving Fielding's ironic treatment of sagacity to be a clean rejection of Bentley's mode of reading, Power argues that in *Tom Jones* "conjectural criticism becomes a genuinely useful analogy for

[116] Kickel, *Novel Notions*, 20.

the relationship between narrator and reader. And there are several points at which sagacity – in the appetitive sense of the word – is genuinely required if the narrator's structure is to be fully understood, and we are to take pleasure in the plot's elaborate patterns."[117] Thus Power (quite usefully for my purposes) treats sagacity as a type of appetite, and argues that a sagacious-appetitive mode of reading is necessary for both enjoying and understanding *Tom Jones*. Indeed, one of the joys of the novel is that enjoying and understanding are so often the same thing. However, sagacity in *Tom Jones* ultimately is insufficient as a mode of judgment, as represented by Squire Western, although it does give birth to a more trustworthy kind of feminine intuition, as represented by his daughter Sophia.

Western is the most complete portrait of sagacity in the novel (although Partridge sometimes gives him a run for his money). Price draws it wonderfully, in miniature:

> Western is the most startling creation in the novel; perhaps the finest English comic character to have emerged after Falstaff. He is a great baby, frankly selfish and uncontrolled, imperious in his whims, cruelly thoughtless, with the tyranny of a demanding child but none of the capacity to spin out of his appetites' subtle schemes of domination or revenge, like Blifil and Lady Bellaston. When he bursts into the London scene, he brings with him the simplicity of the flesh at its most fleshly."[118]

His naïve simplicity and consistently thoughtless, impulsive gestures capture how the physical sense of sagacity is first received unmediated, like first impressions from other senses. Unlike other characters, Western lacks a moral or other appetitive *raison d'être* to filter his sagacious sense for his own or another's benefit. Price's phrase, "the simplicity of the flesh at its most

[117] Power, "Henry Fielding, Richard Bentley, and the 'Sagacious Reader' of 'Tom Jones,'" 770.
[118] Price, *To the Palace of Wisdom; Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake*, 306.

fleshly" suggests the amorality of sagacity; as a bodily instinct, it cannot be helped. He embodies "animal energy without either the selfish cunning that builds upon appetites in some or the generous charity that fuses with appetite (and transforms it) in others.[119] Western's sagacity is unadulterated, which means that without a prudential harness for his animal energy, he follows his own inclinations at every turn, blind to social niceties and nuance, even with the person he loves most, Sophia. Although he tries to find her after she runs away, he soon ends his search to join an impromptu hunt, followed by dinner, drinking, and a nap. He is led, so to speak, by the nose by his appetites.

What he does have, though, is a strong sense of his own central, organizing metaphor, just like Fielding's narrator, which reinforces his role as an alternative ordinary. His preferred metaphor is of hunting, a pursuit requiring much sagacity. However, his metaphors obscure rather than elucidate his meaning: "'Pray, my good neighbour,' said *Allworthy*, 'drop your Metaphors and speak a little plainer" (XVII.iii.781). Western's obsessive appetite for hunting extends to his language, and causes him to disregard the needs of his audience. He is an inadequate narrator, to be sure, and contrasts strongly with Fielding's narrator's cooking and eating metaphors, which in comparison appears to cater all the more strongly to the reader's needs. Likewise, Western's sister, who is his match in drawing inappropriate political analogies of little interest and perhaps even less intelligibility to her audience.

Save for this similarity, Western's sagacity is often drawn in contrast to his sister's, such as here where they are described as two inadequate halves who never quite make a whole (perhaps the opposite of Tom and Sophia).

[119] Price, 307.

> No two Things could be more the Reverse of each other than were the Brother and Sister, in most Instances; particularly in this, That as the Brother never foresaw any thing at a Distance, but was most sagacious in immediately seeing every Thing the Moment it had happened; so the Sister eternally foresaw at a Distance, but was not so quick-sighted to Objects before her Eyes…indeed, both their several Talents were excessive: For as the Sister often foresaw what never came to pass, so the Brother often saw much more than was actually the truth (X.viii.488).

The metaphor for the senses shifts temporarily from smell to sight, with sagacity being compared to the condition of nearsightedness. This, however, like sagacity itself, is not all bad since Western sees everything the moment it happens, as is the case in this moment when he instantly sees that Sophia has run away while the rest of the household is in confusion. This acuity of sense produces a strong initial reaction although we know that the reaction will dissipates just as a smell will over time, to be overtaken by the next and more immediate scent. Being nearsighted, like being sagacious, intensifies the effect of what is most immediate. If the distant background is blurry, the focus will remain on what's visible in front of the nose to the exclusion of all else. Such single-minded focus on nearby details does not correspond necessarily to better judgment, however, as it often leads Western to see "much more than was actually the truth" – a complaint similar to the narrator's at another point that the critic only picks on the piece in front of him without attempting to fit it into the larger context. To use Western's own metaphor, sagacity is the ability to pick up a strong, initial scent. Whether or not the hound (or reader) then follows that scent comes down to some other characteristic.

Sagacity emphasizes the animal nature of man, and beyond a general sense perception, can also refer more specifically to an animal's exceptional intelligence and skill in the adaptation

of means to ends (*OED*). This is the sense meant here, when Western lets his sister know that he has safely secured Sophia behind a locked door.

> As his Looks were full of prodigious Wisdom and Sagacity when he gave his Sister this Information, it is probable he expected much Applause from her for what he had done; but how was he disappointed! when with a most disdainful Aspect, she cried, 'Sure, Brother, you are the weakest of Men (VI.xiv.286-7).

He beams at her like a pet dog who has let loose his hunter's instinct and now joyfully returns to make a present of a half-dead rodent in his maw. She reacts predictably in turn. There is very little to be taken seriously here in the description of his look of wisdom and sagacity, except that the sagacious person has so little idea how he might appear from the outside: the opposite of prudence. Sagacity has a way of fooling the faculty of judgment in how it relies on primordial instincts such as hunting for prey or protecting one's daughter (even if it's from herself). But since the narrator eschews the possibility of developing perfect judgment in how even he undermines his own omniscience, the human, animalistic, appetitive, and fundamentally honest sense of sagacity emerges as a not-entirely-ironic solution to the problem of interpretation. Sagacity's acuity most often combines with blindness, but since justice is also blind, surely this is not entirely a bad thing.

The lovely and canny Sophia is an unlikely heir to Western's brutish sagacity, but she transforms the sensuous knowledge represented by sagacity into a form of feminine intuition that rarely errs. She, followed perhaps by the sympathetic Mrs. Miller, is the novel's best judge of character especially for how she innately understands the difference in Blifil and Tom's natures before Allworthy or anyone else.

> Sophia, when very young, discerned that Tom, tho' an idle, thoughtless rattling Rascal, was no-body's Enemy but his own; and that Master Blifil, tho' a prudent, discreet, sober, young Gentleman, was, at the same Time, strongly attached to the Interest only of one single Person; and who that single Person was, the Reader will be able to divine without any Assistance of ours (IV.v.149).

The wording of Tom and Blifil's relative characters, "idle, thoughtless rattling Rascal" especially, sounds more like a young Sophia's – or a nursemaid's – than the narrator's. In any case, Sophia's very precocious good judgment puts her in the camp of the narrator's historian who is born, not made. The emphasis on her youth suggests that her good judgment derives first from instinct rather than any education, particularly since after her mother's premature death she is left with no other adult's influence other than her unimpressive father and her foolish aunt. Interestingly, both Sophia and Mrs. Miller's intuitive judgments of Tom are predictive rather than factual, meaning that they are willing to look past his youthful indiscretions even while they are happening. They approve of Tom even when he errs. Thus, they demonstrate an implicit understanding of how visible appetites hint at character types and trajectories, but at the same time Sophia recognizes that it would be unwise to act on her intuitive knowledge of Tom until he fulfills her predictive judgment and becomes the man she knows he can be.

Sophia's instinct is key to understanding how she is Western's heir, instinct being a kind of judgment inherent to the body. The narrator describes her with a quote from Donne:

> ---Her pure and eloquent Blood
> Spoke in her Cheeks, and so distinctly wrought
> That one might almost say *her Body thought*

(IV.ii.141; my emphasis.)[120]

The elision in the first line of this quotation hides a telling line for this analysis. "We understood her by her sight" (l. 243-4). Taken together, the lines describe Donne's narrator gaining an understanding of "her" just by her appearance – an intuitive, bodily understanding. In both this poem and *Tom Jones*, sagacity is shown to be a mode of judgment appropriate for both the narrator and heroine, although it also is not named. Notably, this sagacity is not a substitute for a trained intellect, as the narrator ostentatiously presents himself as possessing a classical education, and both the lady of Donne's poem and Sophia are described as being well read, with penetrating intellects. Rather, joining the body with the intellect, being able to *almost* say that that her body thinks, anticipates Allworthy's positive references to Epicureanism and reinforces a complication of a strict dualism between the body and soul. One might say that Fielding almost subscribes to a materialist association of the soul being inherent, not separate, in the body. Similar to the Man of the Hill describing Tom's countenance as a strong letter of recommendation, so several readers have noticed that Sophia's florid good health and strong constitution are outward indicators of her strength of character.

Allworthy praises Sophia for a quality that he cannot name. Not only unnamed, it is also difficult to detect, and Allworthy claims to be able to discern it only because he had formerly observed it in his wife:

> as it is not of a glaring kind, more commonly escapes observation; so little indeed is it remarked that I want a word to express it. I must use negatives on this occasion. I have never heard anything of pertness, or what is called repartee…no pretence to wit, much less to that kind of wisdom which is the result only of great learning and experience, the

[120] John Donne, "Of the Progress of the Soul: Second Anniversary," lines 244-6.

affectation of which, in a young woman, is as absurd as any of the affectations of an ape.

No dictatorial sentiments, no judicial opinions, no profound criticisms (XVII.iii.783).

This is different from modesty, a quality which Allworthy had already remarked on in Sophia, but rather connected to what Allworthy calls "the highest deference to the understandings of men (ibid). Or, to put it in broader terms that a twenty-first-century feminist need not cringe at, as well as connect this description of Sophia's type of judgment to the hermeneutic this novel promotes, it is praise for Sophia refusing to judge in realms where she is not the master, just as the master of the ordinary commands the critic to hold off on judging the plot prematurely because he cannot possibly know better than the narrator. There is undercutting irony in the description of Sophia's refusal to give an opinion on Square and Thwackum's debate, which, rather than being mere deferral to learned men, might be the diplomacy and good sense not to get embroiled in their politicking. One is reminded that Allworthy is not always the best judge of events around him, perhaps especially when he is convinced that he is. However, as with anything ironic for Fielding, it uncovers at the same time that it destabilizes truth and substance. Allworthy essentially praises Sophia for not giving firm opinions where she has no expertise, and indeed she avoids that. But she does give very firm opinions on the worth of Tom, a subject whom she has understood better and longer than anyone else. Sophia's simplicity is that she does not pretend to know better than she actually does, and her sagacity is her instinctive good judgment. They come together to form a kind of bodily intuition that might be called feminine, for lack of a better word.

A better way to judge the hermeneutic contained in Sophia's example – and Mrs. Western's counterexample – is in this novel's one scene of active reading and analysis, where

she is interrupted reading what some scholars believe must be Fielding's sister's, Sarah Fielding's novel, *David Simple*.

> Sophia was in her chamber, reading, when her aunt came in. The moment she saw Mrs Western, she shut the book with so much eagerness, that the good lady could not forbear asking her, What book that was which she seemed so much afraid of showing? 'Upon my word, madam,' answered Sophia, 'it is a book which I am neither ashamed nor afraid to own I have read. It is the production of a young lady of fashion, whose good understanding, I think, doth honour to her sex, and whose good heart is an honour to human nature.' Mrs Western then took up the book, and immediately after threw it down, saying – 'Yes, the author is of a very good family but she is not much among people one knows. I have never read it; for the best judges say, there is not much in it.' – 'I dare not, madam, set up my own opinion,' says Sophia, 'against the best judges, but there appears to me a great deal of human nature in it; and in many parts so much true tenderness and delicacy, that it hath cost me many a tear.' – 'Ay, and do you love to cry then?' says the aunt. 'I love a tender sensation,' answered the niece, 'and would pay the price of a tear for it at any time.' – 'Well, but show me,' said the aunt, 'what was you reading when I came in; there was something very tender in that, I believe, and very loving too. You blush, my dear Sophia. Ah! child, you should read books which would teach you a little hypocrisy, which would instruct you how to hide your thoughts a little better.' (VI.v.245-4)

This scene sets up a contrast between Mrs. Western, who has an opinion on the book even though she has not read it, and Sophia, who likes it for the same reason the narrator says his reader should like *Tom Jones*: it has "a great deal of human nature in it." Sophia's appetite for

reading sparks from the tender sensations it produces within her, as opposed to Mrs. Western's mania for political pamphlets and other readings meant to increase her knowledge for public conversations. Her taste for reading is highly personal, based on no other person's opinions. She metabolizes it privately, in her chamber, and discusses it reluctantly. So far, she resembles the narrator's ideal customer at the ordinary from the first chapter fairly well: she rewards good variations on the literature of human nature with avid appetite, allows herself to be personally led by the narrative rather than resisting it, and avoids forming a negative judgment. Her own description of reading also emphasizes the instinctive, physiological response, with the phrase "tender sensation." Mrs. Western, on the other hand, is the ridiculed reader in this novel because she constantly gets political facts and philosophical references wrong even though she claims to study them; she reads without understanding. She reads at the expense of noticing what actually is going on around her too, such as when she was "deeply engaged in reading a political pamphlet" while Sophia "stole down Stairs…and sallied forth" (X.ix.491). Her gravest hermeneutical sin, though, would probably be contained in this moment, when she condemns what the author has on offer without even tasting it herself.

But it would be a mistake to set Sophia and Mrs. Western up as opposites. Sophia, although she protests modestly, contradicts her aunt's wrongheaded opinion and holds forth her own opinion on the book and the value of reading that genre with some confidence, which might also be interpreted as quite bold. And although Sophia usually seems a better judge of character, Mrs. Western is undeniably canny here, cornering Sophia into confessing her feelings for Tom. This canniness, though, is based on mistaken observations. "By means of this wonderful sagacity, Mrs. Western had now, as she thought, made a discovery of something in the mind of Sophia" (VI.ii.244). "Sagacity" once again is ironized since she is mistaken in her observations,

but its worthy noting that Mrs. Western in fact correctly observes that Sophia shows symptoms of love, but mistook the object partly because her own social biases mean she only could conceive that Sophia would judge as she would, based on social class and rank rather than comeliness and character. Sophia, on the other hand, has her own romantic opinions guiding her understanding during her conversation with her aunt, and so equally cannot conceive of Blifil as a possibility. The structure of their judgment – their intuitive judgment combined with observation and reading – are the same. But Mrs. Western utterly lacks common sense and is too interested in herself to be able to observe and understand others impartially. She does not even understand herself, clearly lacking that worldliness which she clings to so proudly.

Sophia's good, true appetites, which distinguish her from her aunt's ironic sagacity, also lead to her successful reunion with Tom in a time when she reads with literal appetite and Black George redeems himself by sneaking in a note from Tom, hidden within her favorite dish. Locked in her London lodgings and forbidden all contact with Tom, she initially refuses all food (in line with other romantic heroines, but most notably Clarissa), which severely limits Black George's ability to discreetly deliver Tom's letter. But when he appeals to her appetite (with a suggestively fertile dish – a "poulet" filled with its own eggs), both her robust constitution and sense of romance prevail. On discovering the letter alongside the eggs inside the belly of the bird, "*Sophia*, notwithstanding her long Fast, and notwithstanding her favorite Dish was there before her, no sooner saw the Letter than she immediately snatched it up, tore it open, and read" (XVI.iii.746). In what is probably the novel's most explicit example of appetitive reading, Sophia's appetites first put her in possession of the desired letter, and then shift from literal to figurative as she ravenously devours the letter's contents instead of her favorite dish. Despite not having eaten in days, she chooses words over eggs, her appetitive actions confirming her true

feelings for Tom, as shown by the contrasting behavior of other characters in similar situations, like Mrs. Honour, who polishes off a second plate of bacon and eggs at the Upton Inn before relaying the news of Tom being there to Sophia, and Tom, who allows his other appetites to blind him to Sophia's presence at the same inn.

Thus, Sophia's appetitive reading is both romantic and bodily, and her eschewed, fertile meal suggests their combination. It is also intuitive, based in her own good observation and understanding of others, which her reading of novels enhances through encouraging more sympathetic "sensation" and understanding of human nature, rather than critical intellectual exercise, which, at least in Mrs. Western's case, seems to encourage partisan blinders. Sophia's canniness is only bounded by her own, innate appetites as well as some equally canny prudence, shown both in her challenge to Tom to prove his fidelity ("After what is past, Sir, can you expect I should take you upon your Word?" (XVIII.xii.866)), although this is not a strict prudence. She is all too willing to give up her critical reading of Tom's past infidelities and allow her prudence in obeying her father to take precedence, when Western bursts into their reunion and demands that they marry at once. Neither blind nor critical, the good reader follows her instinctive good judgment to her own romantic novel's happy ending.

While Fielding treats prudence less ironically than sagacity, as Eleanor Newman Hutchens diligently determines in her case study of Fielding's use of the word, he still uses "prudence" and its variants negatively or ironically three times as often as not. She is careful to qualify though, and I will prudently follow her example, that this irony must not be interpreted as simply a reversal of meaning since "[i]n practically all instances the word retains its literal

meaning."[121] Hatfield argues that Fielding's irony does not highlight the dangers of prudence, but rather "the dangers of a hypocritical cunning that in popular usage is *called* prudence. His irony, here as elsewhere, is an attempt to reclaim an important moral term from the corruptions of language."[122] But even if prudence is being reclaimed as a moral term, its guidance alone is consistently shown to be insufficient. Instead, prudence is so interesting as a proposed solution to judgment and interpretation in this novel precisely because it is best when it is a learned rather than innate skill. Being described as innately prudent, like Dr. Blifil and his nephew Bilfil, is one of the surest indicators of eventual villainy. It is important to remember that prudence doesn't necessarily lead to good reading and interpretation, especially if Allworthy is any indication, but rather to being read well, which results in Tom's happy ending.

Prudence protects the interpreted object rather than interpreter, and for that reason alone one can predict that it would never be the ideal solution in a novel that focuses on good reading practices. However, given the ever-present danger of misreading, even by a well-intentioned magistrate like Allworthy, prudence is not an entirely facetious solution. Even though prudence is usually associated with the villain, Blifl, the novel declares,

> Prudence and Circumspection are necessary even to the best of Men. They are indeed as it were a Guard to Virtue, without which she can never be safe. It is not enough that your Designs, nay your Actions, are intrinsically good, you must take Care they shall appear so. If your Inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair Outside also. This must be constantly looked to, or Malice and Envy will take Care to blacken it so, that the Sagacity and Goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see thro' it, and to discern the

[121] Hutchens, *Irony in Tom Jones*, 101.
[122] Hatfield, *Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony*, 191.

> Beauties within. Let this, my young Readers, be your constant Maxim, That no Man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the Rules of Prudence; nor will Virtue herself look beautiful, unless she be bedecked with outward Ornaments of Decency and Decorum (III.vii.128).

Fielding offers what amounts to a list of opposites: inside and outside, designs and actions, malice and envy against sagacity and goodness, beauties and that which is blackened. Prudence and circumspection, the narrator suggests, regulate the balance between them. He couches this as advice to the "best of Men," like Tom, counseling that his inner goodness must be mirrored by his exterior in order for anyone to believe it. But of course there is an irony to this advice because of the disequilibrium between the paired terms and how a character like Blifl might deliberately misapply it. If a man's outward appearances are what others will judge him on, his inner motives might be considered superfluous and so this advice could also be read as a guide for hypocrites. The observer's inability to discern what's behind prudence and circumspection, as well as a reader's inability to see past the text on the surface of the page even at the height of her powers of close reading, means that the balance of these opposites seems to tilt towards those of the worst disposition, and is capable of obscuring even Allworthy's positive powers. Although, again, this may be read ironically since the narrator's claim that Allworthy looks for the best in others might be contraindicated by his practice as a magistrate where he mistakenly convicts Jenny Jones, Partridge, and finally Tom.

This explanation of prudence and advice to preserve good appearances might be directed at Tom as the passage immediately previous to it explains why Allworthy was predisposed to sympathize with Blifl when his own mother seemed to prefer Tom. Indeed, the advice might at some level be taken at face value since Tom does seem to take it eventually, gaining some

prudence by the end of the novel in how his constantly-commented-upon "fair outsides" begin to be matched by the "ornaments of decency and decorum" when he settles down with Sophia. Their marriage is prudent for Tom because it gives Tom a new, virtuous-appearing role as her faithful husband (which we are told he in fact fulfills). And of course, their marriage is only possible because Tom's outward appearance of a gentleman becomes verified as true nobility when his rightful position as Allworthy's nephew is established. Insofar as prudence is a condition where appearances look as good as intentions, Tom becomes prudent when he is confirmed to be the nobleman he appears to be. Importantly, he does not seek prudence but becomes prudent organically, over time.

Since the hero Tom eventually conforms to prudent standards, prudence is not simply the false answer to the problems this novel poses. Even though prudence poses a hermeneutical challenge for the observer who cannot always verify whether a character's appearances and intentions match, succeeding in that challenge has good consequences: the characters who correctly judged Tom as superior to Blifil (Sophia, Mrs. Miller, and Partridge) also meet with happy endings. However, the ironic tone in this passage reveals the essentially hypocritical side of prudence, where seeming is more important than actually being (which also might be the definition of a weak or bad metaphor). Blifil exemplifies this hypocritical prudence, and as much as the advice seems intended for Tom, the description of the destructive power of hypocritical prudence draws a portrait of Blifl. His insides are "never so beautiful," blackened by malice and envy, although he takes care to preserve a fair enough outside that Allworthy's cannot see through it.

Perhaps ironically, prudence does not show Allworthy to his best advantage. What does instead is a less-mentioned avenue to good judgment in this novel: a Christian take on the

principles of Epicureanism, which returns us to the cooking and eating analogies that rule this novel. Epicureanism is another tricky term, like sagacity and prudence, which can signify a whole range of philosophy and behavior. In the eighteenth century the term tended to have an immoral tinge to it, "a person devoted to sensual pleasure, especially to eating and drinking; a hedonist; a glutton" (*OED*). And Allworthy would have considered classical epicures to be heathens: materialist atomists who thought that there might be gods, but that they would not deign to intervene in human affairs (quite unlike the interventionist, godlike narrator in this novel). However, Epicureanism also has a moral context compatible with Christian ethics and Allworthy's character. Epicurus taught that pleasure was an innate good, and that seeking pleasure was one of the best ways to live a good life. But crucially, he also taught that the best way to find consistent pleasure in life was in a tranquil life of sustainable, long-term pleasures – which begins to sound like Allworthy's life at Paradise Hall.

Allworthy makes two important references to epicureanism, both of which are characteristically undermined at the time of their mention. One is on his death bed: "One of the *Roman* Poets, I remember, likens our leaving Life to our Departure from a Feast" (V.vii.216). He is in fact quoting Lucretius's poem *De Rerum Natura*, which explained Epicureanism to a Roman audience, and which remains the best and most complete source for Epicurus's teachings. However, he does not seem to have fully bought into that philosophy when Tom literally enacts a feast by getting drunk. Rather than recognizing Tom's adherence to classical as well as Christian epicureanism, Allworthy finds it grounds of Tom's expulsion. The second time is when he brings up epicureanism as a philosophy of charity in a conversation with Captain Blifil within a chapter entitled, "Containing much Matter to exercise the Judgment and Reflection of the Reader." The conversation is a trap set by the Captain and it leads into another of Allworthy's important yet

mistaken judgments, this time of Partridge who is accused of being Tom's father. Allworthy's condemnation of Partridge after this conversation on charity highlights the importance of prudential Christian morality to his philosophy, although the weight of evidence against Partridge is heavy enough that Allworthy's judgment is understandable if harsh.

What's more, eating analogies define Allworthy's morality, and also explain why he is always the last to hear any gossip. Allworthy's rendering of epicureanism begins with his pronouncement that true charity is when "we bestow on another what we really want ourselves." He continues, "Nay, I will venture to go farther, it is being in some degree Epicures: For what could the greatest Epicure wish rather than to eat with many Mouths instead of one; which I think may be predicated of any one who knows that the Bread of many is owing to his own Largesses?" (II.v.89). Twisting the desire of the modern, gluttonous epicure into the philanthropic desire to relieve hunger in others, epicureanism for Allworthy is still a kind of pleasure-seeking, but while imagining that we can feel the pleasure of others as keenly as our own. The choice of food, bread, is also basic enough to be congruent with Epicurus's injunction to seek moderation and simplicity. This injunction repeats itself at his table, which explains why the rumor that Partridge is Tom's father had not yet reached his ears:

> Scandal, therefore, never found any Access to his Table: For as it hath been long since observed, that you may know a Man by his Companions; so I will venture to say, that by attending to the Conversation at a great Man's Table, you may satisfy yourself of his Religion, his Politics, his Taste, and indeed of his entire Disposition (II.vi.90).

Attendees at Allworthy's table find that he wishes to think the best of others, but this desire does not support his position as magistrate. Enlightened epicureanism brings out the better qualities of Allworthy, prudent judgment less so, although he is never shown to be a perfect judge. Like

Sophia's temperance of Western's sagacity into a wise intuition, Allworthy's prudence and epicureanism are best fulfilled in Tom, who embodies classical and well as Christian epicureanism in his pursuit of bodily pleasures, tempered by just enough prudence by the end of the novel to achieve his happy ending.

LITERARY EXCRESCENCES: BLIFIL AND THE MAN OF THE HILL

Ironic and inherent imperfection is an important organizing principle in *Tom Jones*, as is the principle of growth, especially in the character of Tom. After finding so many problems in the other principles the novel proposes for guiding good judgment, this section will now consider whether a knowledge and acknowledgment of imperfection itself is the organizing principle of this novel. The term "excrescences" will guide the logic of this section, although it is not a term Fielding himself employs. Instead, I take it from Ian Watt, who uses the word to describe and criticize this narrator's digressions and the effect they have on the rest of the plot.[123] But I also take if from one of Fielding's earliest critics, Richard Cumberland, who in 1795 dismissed the Man of the Hill episode also as "an excrescence."[124] As Hunter has described, "at least a hundred critics have answered, explained, or justified" these excrescences and I am going to toss my hat in the ring too because the term has such salience and suggestiveness for a hermeneutic of appetite.[125] Excrescences are a reminder that "not everything in novels – even in good novels – goes the way critics and critical theorists think it should, and some of the 'failures' are

[123] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 268.
[124] Janes, "Fielding and the Case of the Misguided Reader," 180.
[125] Hunter, *Before Novels*, 326.

characteristic of the species, even definitive."[126] Derrida further describes how this is not just true of novels, but of genre in general. The "law of genre" he says, "is precisely a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy."[127] Similarly, appetite, which leads to consumption, will inevitably yield waste if we take the logic of the metaphor seriously.

For Watt, excrescences such as the narrator's prefatory chapters at the beginning of each book are a kind of literary waste. He is not alone in this opinion. "Fielding's contemporaries regarded them as separable from the story" too – "either delightful or deplorable but invariably superfluous."[128] The word "excrescences" refers to the action of growing out or forth (an action of filling a gap, perhaps), and suggests immoderation and perhaps abnormality in that action of growth, descriptions which have particular salience for such an immoderate novel and protagonist (*OED*). "Excrescence" might also playfully suggest the literal end product for a novel filled with eating: "excrement," a universally recognized form of waste. I take this connection from Fredric Bogel, who observes the rift in the word "excrement," as exemplified by its two separate entries in the *OED*. The first meaning of the word comes from the Latin *ex* + *cernere*: to sift out. The second meaning, though, derives from *ex* + *carescere*, or, to grow out. Thus, excretion is both separate and inseparable from us, and there is a "basic ambiguity surrounding the status of feces and other excretions that seem to be, unsimplifiably, both 'us' and 'not us' at the same time."[129] Whereas Watt seems to attach a value judgment to literary "excrescences" similar to that for "excrement," Hunter begins to reclaim it by insisting that an excrescence not only holds intrinsic value but also is not necessarily abnormal – that

[126] Hunter, 29.
[127] Derrida and Ronell, "The Law of Genre," 59.
[128] Parker, *The Author's Inheritance*, 65.
[129] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 115.

excrescences are not the exception to the rule by which to understand the novel but rather the essence of the novel itself. Ultimately, however, Hunter substitutes "digressions" for "excrescences," sacrificing what I take to be a particularly suggestive and salient general term for the value of pointing to a specific so-called literary "failing." I hold onto Watt's term to describe the problem of waste both in the plot and in its interpretation without accepting his value judgment of the term (and of *Tom Jones*), taking Hunter as my cue to study how excrescences work on three levels in this novel to add nuance, depth, and the possibility of failure to the hermeneutic of appetite: with the novel's unrepentant villain, Blifil, the so-called digressions within the plot, and the implied-reader's implied failures of interpretation.

Blifil is the one character who is disinherited – an excremental excrescence – even though by all rights he should be the legal heir to Allworthy, as Bridget's legitimate, if second, son. Instead, he comes to represent a dangerous outgrowth of prudence because of his perverted, self-centered appetites. Blifil is an extreme case study of appetites' natural proclivity to be self-centered. His mode of judgment begins and ends with prudence, with no palliating sagacity or Epicurean values of seeking pleasure in the greater good. Using the novel's gastronomic language, we might see Blifl as representing the moral failings of French high gastronomy which uses tricky sauces which cover the true essence of the meat of human nature, as opposed to the John Bull aesthetic of the simplicity of good, plain roast beef. It is the difference between heightening the appetite through cookery that takes advantage of already good raw ingredients and only adds its appeal through simple methods that do not hide its main object, and cookery that attempts to hide corrupted and diseased meat through heavy, thick sauces.

> Tho' Mr. *Blifil* was not of the Complexion of *Jones*, nor ready to eat every Woman he saw; yet he was far from being destitute of that Appetite which is said to be the common

> Property of all Animals. With this, he had likewise that distinguishing Taste, which serves to direct Men in their Choice of the Object, or Food of their several Appetites; and this taught him to consider *Sophia* as the most delicious Morsel, indeed to regard her with the same Desires which an Ortolan inspires into the Soul of an Epicure. Now the Agonies which affected the Mind of *Sophia* rather augmented than impaired her Beauty; for her Tears added Brightness to her Eyes, and her Breasts rose higher with her Sighs. Indeed, no one hath seen Beauty in its highest Lustre, who hath never seen it in Distress. *Blifil* therefore looked on this human Ortolan with greater Desire than when he viewed her last (VII.vi.307).

Blifil is first compared to Tom for having the weaker appetite, but he is also then compared to an Epicure. This time, though, epicureanism is brought up not in its classical understanding, as seeking pleasure in a simple life of good works, but in its corrupted eighteenth-century meaning: a man who devotes his life to his own physical pleasures. While Allworthy as epicure finds pleasure in contemplating other mouths eating bread, Blifil only finds pleasure in contemplating his own attainment of Sophia's person.

The analogy of Sophia's agonies to those of the ortolan songbird reveals a disturbing edge to Blifil's appetites. Ortolans are a French delicacy of even more dubious morality than the production foie gras (eating ortolans currently is banned in France). The song bird instinctively only eats in the dark, and so it is either caged in the dark, or its eyes are stabbed out, in order to force it to gorge itself. Afterwards it is placed in armagnac liqueur in which it both drowns and marinates. A simple eight-minute roasting completes the process and it is served and eaten

whole, in a single bite.[130] There is a tradition that one must eat an ortolan with a napkin draped over one's head in order to hide from God while devouring this innocent and delightful bird in so barbaric a manner, but this might actually date to a few decades after *Tom Jones*, as it is reported for the first time by gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in his fascinating *Physiology of Taste* (1825). There are devotees who "claim they can taste the bird's entire life as they chew in the darkness."[131] Eaters of the ortolan consume the bird with flagrant, intentional disregard for humane treatment. Their pleasure outweighs any other concern. Just so, the narrator compares Blifil's appetite for Sophia, who finds her beauty heightened by the distress she shows in him possessing her. Blifil's appetites are sadistic, dependent on the pain of others to be convinced of his own gain, and only satiated by another's pain. This kind of appetite is inherent, as the reference to the ortolan recalls the anecdote from Blifil's childhood, when he stole and set loose Sophia's pet song bird, which she had named Tom.

As this novel's opening chapter explains, French high cuisine was understood to induce unnatural appetites where there are none to begin with, and this comparison to Blifil's desire for Sophia to a gourmet's desire for an ortolan suggests that his character flaw lies in how his pleasure comes at the expense of other characters, which contrasts those appetites that are meant to be shared with others – like Tom's for sex, friendship, and a hearty meal. Blifil seems to use sadism as a seasoning to induce appetites where none existed in the first place. His "Appetites were, by nature, so moderate, that he was able, by Philosophy or Study, or by some other Method, easily to subdue them" (VI.iv.252). Herein lies the rub. With the counter-example of

[130] The peculiar barbarity of eating the bird whole – beak, innards, and all – suggests the civilizing effects of butchering meat and Fielding's comment in *Joseph Andrews* about the helpfulness of butchering a novel into sections: "It becomes an author generally to divide a book, as it does a butcher to joint his meat, for such assistance is of great help to both the reader and the carver" (II.i.75).
[131] Allen, *In the Devil's Garden*.

Blifil's villainous lack of true appetite, the novel seems to reclaim "appetite" from being a selfish mode of self-gratification, to an understanding of it as a mode of positively interacting with the world. Appetites may lead to imprudence, as Tom's example surely enacts, but they ultimately seek a wholesome object that will nourish and satiate for the long-term. A good body with good appetites will eventually lead to good judgment in (and for) *Tom Jones*. However, to the extent that Blifl also has appetite, the term must remain amoral with an ironic edge for how often it can lead anyone astray, and it is treated likewise in Fielding's *Modern Glossary*, as seen in his definition of "LOVE. A Word Properly applied to our Delight in particular Kinds of Food; sometimes metaphorically spoken of the favourite Objects of all our *Appetites*.[132] Blifil's example troubles a hermeneutic of appetite because he shows that there may be no natural, inherent goodness to them, and that they can instead be consistently sadistic and self-centered – a concern which is mirrored in the narrator's concerns about whether his reader has a naturally good appetite for his novel, and if not, whether he can induce it.

While Blifil's example troubles a hermeneutic of appetite by demonstrating how appetites might not be innately good, the Man of the Hill episode demonstrates the integrity of Fielding's digressions to his overall point. The failed case studies represented in this particular digression prove to be the negative space which define the contours of the more positive role and effects of appetites in the rest of the novel. It is one of the least-loved parts of the novel, usually for how as a story-within-a-story it lacks a clear purpose within the larger plot and disrupts the flow of Tom's journey. As Hunter notes, "when they are being polite, critics often call stories-within 'interpolations,' as if they were a foreign substance adulterating an otherwise pure text, and less politely they are often called 'excrescences' or 'blots' that ruin or at least mar the unity

[132] As quoted in Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 162–63.

of the whole that contains them."[133] I argue that the Man of the Hill is an intentional blot. Fielding goes from offering ironic solutions to the problem of interpretation through descriptions of sagacity, prudence, and epicureanism, to here offering case studies of failed appetites, reading, and narrating. These are failures that show that the ironic solutions are not all bad and in fact might be taken as serious offerings.

Funnily enough, this controversial episode was subject to conspicuous scrapping and re-working by Fielding himself, according to Hugh Amory.[134] On noticing that the third edition (12 April 1749) had new versions of substantial passages from the 'Man of the Hill' episode, but that these changes also seemed less polished, he conjectured that these variants represented Fielding's first manuscript submitted to the printers, which he then apparently changed before the first edition was finished. Amory suggests that the third edition was accidentally based on an un-updated first edition, which Fielding was able to correct when he revised the novel for its fourth edition. In the fourth edition, the episode is restored as it was in the first and second editions (with a few changes), rather than changed all over again. The episode shows remarkable tenacity even in its bibliographical history, as the first draft that went to waste found a perhaps accidental afterlife in the third edition. Although it was ultimately relegated again to the trash heap, this literary waste will be revived and studied so long as Amory's theory remains unproved. The gap in his theory is that no one has yet discovered a defective first copy of the first edition.

Editors generally agree that the style and writing are better and more in line with the rest of *Tom Jones* in the accepted, final version, but the content also reflects a change to make the

[133] Hunter, *Before Novels*, 47–48.
[134] According to Hugh Amory and reiterated by the Penguin Classics 2005 edition that calls his theory "persuasive." Fielding, Keymer, and Wakely, *The History of Tom Jones*. 876.

Man of the Hill's objections to humanity more universal. The version that appears in the third edition is more partisan, with pointed exclamations against the Jacobites rather than mankind as a whole. If this is indeed Fielding's first draft, then its waste is historical specificity, which gives way to more lasting, universal sentiments in subsequent variations. This is one signal of Fielding's own preoccupation with the problem of literary waste – and his attempt to avoid it in this particular episode. There is no conclusive evidence that Fielding planned on excising the whole Man of the Hill incident, a decision which countless readers have questioned ever since (but not here).

Waste in the episode with the Man of the Hill seems too pervasive on every level of the story to be accidental. It abounds in descriptions, repeated stresses on the difference between appearances and reality, even economically as the Man admits his life was undone by abusing credit until he had overwhelming debt. In the development of a gambling life that ultimately led to that last point, the Man sardonically remembers one of the first times he played there being a "remarkable Accident" where at the end of the game "there was scarce a Guinea to be seen on the Table; and this was the stranger, as every Person present except myself declared he had lost; and what was become of the Money, unless the Devil himself carried it away, is difficult to determine" (VIII.xii.409). While Tom understands the joke of that impossibility within the zero-sum game, Partridge credulously picks up on the Man's facetious possibility, latching onto the idea of ghosts and spirits – that is, some kind of excrescent outgrowth beyond the material wor(l)d.

The Man of the Hill episode is a case study for a failed hermeneutic of appetite in how Partridge models an unsuccessful sagacious reader and the Man the undesirable alternative narrator. But Tom also emerges as a model reader in this episode – the opposite of the little

reptile of a critic – who listens (for the most part) with appetite and understanding, waiting until the Man finishes his tale before he critiques any part. This is along the lines of how Hunter reads it too: "Tom, on his way to becoming sensible and mature, is the type of the Judicious Reader, and Partridge of the Credulous one, and the two sets of responses together, which absorb a lot of our attention through the Man's story, make the story-within a performance and episode in the novel, rather than an inset of the type included impersonally in romance."[135] Beyond testing the limits of a hermeneutic of appetite, the episode captures another dark side of unfulfilled appetite, beyond the threat of the narrator force feeding the reader: starvation.

There is general critical agreement that the Man represents the shadow side of Tom, and while that has some relevance here, especially as regards his appetites, I am more interested in how he also might represent the shadow narrator in how he interrupts Tom's progress to London and temporarily takes over the narrative with his own story. Most importantly, the Man's representation of the shadow side of the novel's cooking and eating analogies rear the specter of indigestion, starvation, and, more comically, the logical end product of these ruling analogies: excrement.

My reading of the Man of the Hill episode owes a debt to O'Brien, whose own focus on Fielding's food imagery led him to explain the episode thusly:

> Avoidance of the feast and rejection of appetite is another failing important to the narrator. That is why he must have his hero meet a character like the man of the hill. Though he does not act to destroy and hypocritically to manipulate the bond of appetite among men, as do these others, the man of the hill does reject it as if to eat as any other

[135] Hunter, *Before Novels*, 49.

person would be to poison himself. He has no provisions in his house but brandy, and his diet "is chiefly upon Herbs."[136]

When Partridge and Tom meet him, the Man has rejected society so far as to even reject cultivated crops, only foraged herbs on his solitary walks. The brandy would seem a concession to sociability and pleasure, except that the Man lives in silence with his housekeeper and admits the whisky has lasted in his house for thirty years. Its use is primarily if not solely medicinal, as it is in this scene when he offers Partridge a dram to get over his shock and cold.

The Man's present situation represents a rejection of all appetites, but he claims to have been highly appetitive as a young man: "I was high-mettled, had a violent Flow of animal Spirits, was ambitious, and extremely amorous" (VIII.xi.398). This description sounds similar to Tom's appetitiveness, except perhaps for the ambition, but an important difference between the two lies in how the Man laments his appetites being corrupted, in this instance with women. "I could with less Pain endure the raging of my own natural unsatisfied Appetites, even Hunger and Thirst, than I could submit to leave ungratified the most whimsical Desires of a Woman, on whom I so extravagantly doated, that tho' I knew she had been the Mistress of half my Acquaintance, I firmly intended to marry her" (VIII.xi.401). The Man ignores his own, inherent appetites in order to indulge the appetites of his prostitute mistress – a bastardization of Allworthy's epicureanism in how he sought pleasure in fulfilling the needs of others. His is also a corrupt marriage plot, compared to Tom's. Tom only ever truly desires an honorable union with Sophia. All other thoughts of marriage, such as to Molly when he discovers her pregnancy, or when he runs out of ways to tactfully reject Lady Bellaston, are circumstantial exigencies. But the Man desires a corrupt woman who does not even love him back.

[136] O'Brien, "The Hungry Author and Narrative Performance in Tom Jones," 625.

Appetites thwarted, a series of unfortunate events and poor decisions lands him in London, penniless and alone, which the Man compares, literally and figuratively, to both gluttony and starvation, in the ultimate reversal of the true narrator's cooking and eating metaphors.

> Grief or Shame…are the most unwholesome Diet in the World; and on which (though there are many who never taste either but in public) there are some who can feed very plentifully, and very fatally when alone. But as there is scarce any human Good without its concomitant Evil, so there are People who find an Inconvenience in this unobserving Temper of Mankind; I mean Persons who have no money; for as you are not put out of Countenance, so neither are you cloathed or fed by those who do not know you. And a Man may be as easily starved in Leadenhall Market as in the Deserts of Arabia (VIII.xii.405).

Withdrawn from corrupting society, the Man claims to feed on "grief and shame." But he shifts from the issue of figurative to literal eating suddenly, concluding that having money is the sole difference between being able to feed luxuriously off regrets or literal starvation. Money and society may substitute for each other, and one may still subsist on the strength of one or the other. But at least one of these must be in place, or death is the consequence. Partridge's experience confirms the Man's thesis. "Partridge, having now lost his Wife, his School, and his Annuity, and the unknown Person having now discontinued the last-mentioned charity, resolved to change the Scene, and left the Country, where he was in Danger of starving with the universal Compassion of all his Neighbours" (II.vi.95). Deprived of his income and place in society because of Allworthy's judgment that he is Tom's father, the only reason Partridge doesn't starve is because he is willing to move to find a new society.

The real threat of starvation suggests how the "bill of fare of human nature as served up in the novel is often indigestible, as the Man of the Hill rightly and indispensably insists."[137] But the Man himself also is implicated in the indigestibility of the novel's bill of fare, representing a shadow-narrator. He describes his story telling as a kind of feeding: "but I have, I believe satisfied you with this Taste." (VIII.xi.399) However, both of his listeners come away unsatisfied with the story: Partridge because he could not get all of his questions answered and because it eventually put him to sleep, but also Tom because he fundamentally disagrees with the narrator's pessimistic view on human nature. The Man also seems unsatisfied by his own narration in how he describes that after his last friend betrayed him, "from that Day to this my History is little better than a Blank" (VIII.xiv.421).

This "blank" is very interesting for a few reasons. For one, on a more humorous note, it can be interpreted by coming back to the digestive metaphor, the blank being a void left after the evacuation of all noxious elements in the Man's life. Tom compares the Man's choice of companions to the "nauseous and unwholesome Element" found "in a Jakes," jakes being contemporary slang for a toilet (VIII.xv.426). But also, the Man's process of eliminating all corruption – and all society – from his life takes us back to the narrator's description of "the Truth-finder, having raked out that Jakes, his own Mind, and being there capable of tracing no Ray of Divinity, nor any thing virtuous, or good, or lovely, or loving, very fairly, honestly, and logically concludes, that no such things exist in the whole Creation" (VI.i.241). Like the Truth-finder, the Man has raked out the unsavory elements from his life, but when he was left with nothing – that blank – he concludes that nothing good exists anywhere. The blank also marks the end of the man's story both because it is literally a concluding statement, and also because that

[137] Janes, "Fielding and the Case of the Misguided Reader," 172.

blank represents how there is nothing more to say, similar to how the blank pages at the end of a bound book confirm that the narrative has truly ended.

Finally, that blank may be read as a final indictment on the Man's inability to interpret well. His is a self-inflicted blank, shown by how, when pressed, he admits to travelling widely, which interests Tom and most readers. Yet the Man dismisses this narrative material: "however entertaining it might be in itself, scarce made me Amends for the Trouble the Company gave me" (VIII.xv.423). After a string of bad decisions and relationships, the Man has thrown in the towel on all of mankind, denies there is anything more of interest worth narrating, and peremptorily ended his narrative even when he has eager readers. In today's parlance, he has lost control over his personal narrative – a phrase which has particular salience given the importance of the narrator in this novel. Thus, the Man's is a wasted life primarily because he reported it to be so, rather than it being the only interpretation of the facts. He has chosen that his narrative will be nothing more than a blank going forward in order to give greater emphasis to the negative events on which he focuses. This suggests that a good personal narrative might also be the sign of a good interpreter, and that Tom's happy ending means that he has gained control not only of his appetites but of his own story in how he not only learns his true origins but also ensures his own happy ending in wedding Sophia.

Just as the Man has been convincingly interpreted as the potential shadow side of Tom, Partridge acts in this scene as the shadow side of Fielding's ideal reader. On the one hand, Partridge shows extraordinary appetite for the Man's stories, but on the other, this enthusiasm interrupts his ability to listen and that along with his pedantic inclinations turns him into a parody of the literary critic. Several times he interjects affirmations and proofs of his own knowledge, in competition with the Man's story, such as when he glosses the meaning of the name *Xanthippe*,

or needlessly close reads a word of his own story, interrupting the Man: "Recognizance, I think they call it, a hard Word compounded of *re* and *cognosco*; but it differs in its Meaning from the Use of the Simple, as many other Compounds do" (VIII.xi.396, 403). The close readings Partridge offers do nothing to enhance Tom and the Man's knowledge and interest, rather the opposite, as both are better educated and have no need of Partridge's interpretive help. While the Man bears these interruptions, Tom attempts to correct Partridge, and sometimes succeeds in stopping him: "*Jones* chid the Pedagogue for his Interruption, and then the Stranger proceeded" (VIII.xi.397). Partridge further interrupts this narrative within a narrative with questions of extreme detail which get ignored as "impertinent Questions," and questions to verify literal truth: "'Pray, Sir, where was the Wound,' says *Partridge*. The Stranger satisfied him it was in his Arm, and then continued his narrative" (VIII.xiv.400, 420). This last question rings of a doubtful saint Thomas asking to see the Christ's wounds from the cross after his resurrection – an infamous lack of trust that made him go down in history as only slightly better an apostle than Judas.

Tom's patience, credulity, and attentiveness differentiate him from Partridge, and his protection of the Man's narratives against interruptions obeys the narrator's injunction that the critic understand the whole before he critiques any parts. However, in a novel filled to the brim with the narrator's own interruptions, they clearly serve a purpose. Bogel argues that the "discontinuity" represented by digressions "serves to enforce a particular perspective, a particular mode of knowledge." He reads some sincerity in Fielding's injunction in *Joseph Andrews* that "it becomes an author generally to divide a book, as it does a butcher to joint his meat, for such assistance is of great help to both the reader and the carver" (II.i.75).[138] Indeed, Tom's good manners in smothering Partridge's interruptions might sometimes hinder another

[138] Bogel, *Acts of Knowledge*, 227–28.

reader's, or at least Partridge's, understanding, suggesting how intrusions might perform the same work as divisions like chapters in a novel. For instance, "*Partridge* was going to enquire the Meaning of the Word; but *Jones* stopped his Mouth" (VIII.xii.407). Tom stopping Partridge's mouth has the dual effect of preserving the integrity of the Man's story, but he also might be leaving Partridge in the dark. Partridge's appetites as an audience are not all bad, as one might suspect in this novel of mixed appetites. Another time when Tom~~s~~ "attempted fresh Apologies" for Partridge he is prevented, his apologies for interruptions therefore becoming yet another interruption. Only after the refused apology can they get back to listening with "greedy and impatient Ears," which the Man is happy to feed with his story (VIII.xiv.422).

While Tom seems to be a more considerate and humane reader than Partridge, it sometimes comes at the expense of the integrity of the narrative. When he observes the Man becoming emotional at one point, he "desired him to pass over any thing that might give him Pain in the Relation." However, Partridge "eagerly cried out, 'O pray, Sir, let us hear this; I had rather hear this than all the rest'" (VIII.xi.400). In this case it turns out the Man is willing to oblige Partridge and it is an important development in the Man's character, meaning that Tom's compassionate excusal might have cut off the narrative even more than Partridge's interruption. Partridge's appetite for narrative saves him from being a mere shadow side of the ideal reader, and Tom's interventions, well-intentioned as they may be, are not aimed at understanding the narrative to its fullest, and so, while he is undoubtedly a better reader than Partridge (proven by how he continues on with the Man while Partridge falls asleep), he still is not the ideal, at least not yet.

THE POWER OF COMBINING APPETITES:
TOM'S PATH TO WISDOM AND INTERPRETING WITH A COMMUNITY OF READERS

The useful term "excrescences" not only points to literary outgrowths and possible waste in *Tom Jones*, it also suggests how to read the inheritance and marriage plots which determine the fates of Blifil, Tom, and Sophia; an "excrescence," being a natural outgrowth or appendage, suggests how they should be read as heirs. While it's true that Allworthy only makes Tom his heir after their familial bond is confirmed, Allworthy's preference of the illegitimate Tom over the legitimate Blifil confirms that he considers carrying forward his legacy in generous and honest judgment to be just as important as carrying on his family's bloodline. Tom's happy ending thus seems to be the direct result of his pursuit of his hearty good appetites, which, having propelled him into a meandering path of errors at first, finally reconcile into the happy conclusion of the marriage plot when Allworthy and Western follow Sophia and Mrs. Miller in understanding Tom by his good impulses rather than by those appetites' excesses. In this way, Fielding's characters and his reader come to a shared understanding of Tom, forming a community of readers so powerful in its united judgment that the centralized voice of the narrator becomes superfluous.

Tom's appetites and his identity provide a nearly perfect solution to the novel. The secret of Tom's birth is hidden in plain sight, not only in his appealing good looks, which are continually being commented upon as a recommendation of his character (similarly to how Sophia's body almost seems to talk), but also in his impulse to be generous and help others to the full extent of his means, which betokens someone with the means to be a philanthropist. That

said, this truth is pretty well hidden until its revelation at the end because of the narrator' s orchestration of events and information. Until then, Tom is a kind of interpretive mirror as the way other characters "judge him is an indication of their quality of perception and moral worth."[139] And indeed, characters like Mrs. Miller, with her heart of gold, and Sophia, who has always seen the good in Tom, are also morally upright and perceptive characters in other ways, not only with Tom. Characters like Blifil and Thwackum, who have an inherent dislike of Tom, likewise prove to be uncharitable and unlikable.

Reading Tom is also a mirror for the reader. As Preston argues, "[w]hat we are to appreciate in his nature is something like the discernment and judgment we ourselves are expected to display in our reading of the novel."[140] As Tom trains his appetites, the narrator likewise attempts to train the reader, although the relationship between the two in each case is fundamentally unruly, as both Tom's appetites and the narrator's implied readers are invisible and unpredictable forces. Tom's subdual of his gallantry and the report of his ensuing faithfulness to Sophia is a signal that he is indeed Allworthy's true heir. This ending signals the narrator's control over the reader in how he reveals the surprising plot twist about Tom (and how he has been able to conceal it), at the same time that the narrator hands over the interpretation of the plot (both Tom's story and the narrator's intrusions) with this hermeneutical key.

And so, while he is not the ideal reader (he just marries her), the character of Tom can also be thought of as that hermeneutical key, especially in how his character develops a type of judgment superior to even the best magistrate when he combines his natural proclivity to Western's type of sagacity with Allworthy's prudence. "Tom stands between Western and

[139] Konigsberg, *Narrative Technique in the English Novel*, 154.
[140] Preston, *The Created Self; the Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 129.

Allworthy, able to participate in the worlds of both – an innocent carnality in Western and a rational charity in Allworthy – and bring them together."[141] Price's phrasing here seems right in that Tom is able to relate strongly and individually with both Western and Allworthy, participating fully in both of their worlds, but he also exceeds both in how he is able to combine their modes of judgment into something his own.

How he combines these modes of judgment results in something very much like Allworthy's Christian Epicureanism, and this was always already at the core of character even during his episodes of imprudence: "He was never an indifferent Spectator of the Misery or Happiness of any one; and he felt either the one or the other in greater Proportion as he himself contributed to either" (XV.viii.719). His sympathy is high-pitched, and mirrors or perhaps even exceeds ("in greater proportion") Allworthy's statement that he enjoys the pleasure of eating through the mouths of those he helped to feed. Like Allworthy, Tom's kind of epicureanism derives from the classical understanding rather than the corrupted modern meaning, as shown by his good-natured retort to the naked Square's self-justifications in Molly's bedroom: 'Right!' cries *Jones*, 'what can be more innocent than the Indulgence of a natural Appetite? Or what more laudable than the Propagation of our Species?" (V.v.207). Tom's ironic agreement with Square's justifications for his affair with Molly exposes and undercuts Square's corrupted epicurean morality of pleasure being a moral end in itself. As he comes at that moment in order to take responsibility for Molly's pregnancy, Tom cannot help but be implicated in this indictment as well, but there is a big difference between Square's instinct to proudly justify his affair and Tom's remorse. Tom's ironic reply reserves judgment on Square, revealing his own good judgment, while also recognizing Tom's own inability to cast stones. This difference with

[141] Price, *To the Palace of Wisdom; Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake*, 307.

Allworthy seems to be an improvement, as he cannot repeat the mistake of Allworthy's several pious speeches of judgment, which not coincidentally in each case, for Jenny, Partridge, and Tom, were undeserved. Tom is offered as the opposite of that indifferent reader whom the narrator periodically posits, who might have the power to annihilate the novel's hermeneutic of appetite. The opposite of indifferent, Tom is always active, morally as well as peripatetically, taking full if not excessive responsibility for the power of his actions on others. This active quality ties back to the physicality of Western's sagacity, but exceeds it in his concern and consideration for others.

Neither simply prudence nor sagacity, is there a more precise way to describe Tom's way of interacting with and interpreting the world? Classical Epicureanism seems like a good start, especially since he exceeds even Allworthy in his powers of empathy and thus in finding pleasure in the greater good. But it seems wise to hesitate to ascribe a name, let alone a philosophy, to it too easily since even the narrator struggles with naming it:

> Mr. *Jones* had Somewhat about him, which, though I think Writers are not thoroughly agreed in its Name, doth certainly inhabit some human Breasts; whose Use is not so properly to distinguish Right from Wrong, as to prompt and incite them to the former, and to restrain and with-hold them from the latter. (IV.vi.154)

The name of this is partly what my essay is getting at, although naming it too specifically might unfairly pin down Fielding to a particular philosophy or tenets of Christianity since he describes a mode of living well in the world that seems to intentionally universal, intelligible across cultural contexts or creeds: an appetite for goodness, generosity, and sociability. Perhaps Fielding intended to make the moral values represented in *Tom Jones* seem more universal by not naming it more specifically.

At its base, these values seem to be based on some kind of bodily knowledge, similar to how Sophia's body seemed to think. Empson might be describing this elusive quality when he declares Tom the hero of the novel "because he is born with good impulses," further emphasizing his appetitive behavior in his description of Tom as "a kind of noble savage."[142] Naming his impulses as already good is an argument for Tom being inherently worthy of his final status as the novel's noble hero, which might be right given the anecdotes of his selfless behavior towards Black George and Sophia as a child. However, the novel also focuses on Tom's development and suggests that he earns his better name when he is no longer Tom *Jones*. Allworthy combines these two competing interpretations of Tom when he names Tom's primary impulses as "Goodness, Generosity, and Honour," but also cautions him that while these three qualities make him "worthy of Happiness" only "Prudence and Religion" will "put [him] in Possession of it" (V.vii.217). Tom's progression to prudence happens fairly quickly, though, a cursory treatment which would agree with the sum of critics' and the novel's points of view on Tom, that the most decisive factor of his goodness comes from a noble impulse, that is, something inherent and bodily rather than learned. Thus, while classical Epicureanism seems to describe Tom's pleasure in helping others, it would be misleading to ascribe the philosophy to him because he does not behave so nobly out of philosophy but out of a pure appetite for goodness. Recognizing that Tom's behavior is predicted by an unusually large appetite for goodness helps to explain his numerous errors and misjudgments, epitomized by the merging and conflation of his appetites for meat and sex at the Upton Inn (and the novel, in its zestfulness and lack of prudery acknowledges both as equally good in the pleasure they provide).

[142] Empson, "Tom Jones," 40.

His appetitive behavior at the Upton Inn links him back to the epic tradition, to characters like Odysseus for whom feasting formed a significant part of his journey. But feasts in *The Odyssey* were representative of hospitality in strange lands, or celebration after victory in battle. Homer does not dwell on the particulars, but Fielding cannot be accused of the same. Part of Tom's trouble in reaching the standard of an epic hero is that he is portrayed much more materially than any other literary hero before him. It is the narrator's philosophy that heroes "have certainly more of mortal than divine about them" and are "subject to the vilest offices of human nature," including "the act of eating." The narrator satirizes the upholders of the epic tradition, those "several wise men" who consider eating to be "extremely mean and derogatory" to the "philosophical dignity," suggesting that these philosophers "aim at confining such low offices to themselves – as when, by hoarding or destroying, they seem desirous to prevent any others from eating." Opposed to this type of withholding, this narrator does not seek to starve his hero, but places him in a modified epic tradition, calling *The Odyssey* "that eating poem," and by claiming that "Nature hath been so frolicsome as to exact of these dignified characters a much more exorbitant share of this office [eating] than she hath obliged those of the lowest order to perform" (IX.v.445-6). Partly, then, Tom's appetite satirizes realism in the novel, as the narrator chronicles quotidian details about the hero's life. But, as the comment that heroes actually tend to have larger appetites than others suggests, eating is connected to heroic ability. Therefore, Tom must be more vital and successful than the anemic shadows of heroes past. He is an everyday hero because of his appetites. Eating is not an epic symbol but a basic necessity, as the narrator reminds the reader and Partridge reminds Tom when he forgets to eat on the road. Tom punctuates his journey to London with several stops at ale houses and taverns, and even that is

not enough for Partridge, who urges him continually to stop to eat and drink even more (XV.v; XII.xiii).

Although the realism of Tom's need to eat ironizes his connection to past epic heroes, the constant conflation between the literal logic and rhetorical and moral implications of the food metaphors also mean that Tom's eating actually makes him more heroic; eating gives him strength and courage.

> *Jones* swallowed a large Mess of Chicken, or rather Cock Broth, with a very good Appetite, as indeed he would have done the Cock it was made of, with a Pound of Bacon into the Bargain and now, finding in himself no Deficiency of either Health or Spirit, he resolved to get up and seek his Enemy (VII.xiv.342).

If there were any doubt that Tom represents a modern epicure interested in fine foods and wine instead of a classical one who seeks longer lasting pleasures, his total lack of concern for what and how he eats here (as well as at Upton and in numerous other instances) should be proof enough. He "swallows" rather than tastes the "mess" of a meal, apparently as easily satisfied by a meaty chicken, a broth, or even the jellied, sloppy, boiled cock that made the broth on which he now happily dines. "Mess" is a particularly interesting designation for Tom's meal, as it is a word that emphasizes not only the large and undiscriminating combination of his meal but also the collective, coming-together aspect of feasting, as "mess" can also signify a communal meal, especially but not exclusively in the military (*OED*). Tom's appetites never isolate him, and instead represent a combinatory urge. His having a "very good Appetite" is totally different from having taste and discernment, although it does have moral ramifications in how the goodness of Tom's appetite is not simply an intensifying word but also a moral designation. It is the urge that gets him to fill a deficiency in his spirits, an urge to become better than he already is. But this

extraversion fueled by his meal also leads him to more morally dubious interactions, such as at the Upton Inn. Fulfilling this very "good" appetite gives him strength for what the narrator terms "a battle of the amorous kind" when at Upton "his Dinner was no sooner ended than his Attention to other Matters revived" (IX.v.446-7). Appetite is repeatedly shown to be amoral in itself, the choice of object to fulfill it is key to its heroic results; but without an abundance of appetite, and that appetite being directed towards the general good, nothing good is possible, as Blifil's example shows.

The episode at the Upton Inn shows Tom at his hungriest, and not so coincidentally making his worst decisions. It proves to be a case study on the shifting character of appetites, as well as the amoral quality which nevertheless tends towards the good, eventually. It happens to Partridge first, when he enters "round the Kitchin Fire, where good Humor seemed to maintain an absolute Dominion and *Partridge* not only forgot his shameful Defeat, but converted Hunger into Thirst, and soon became extremely facetious" (IX.iv.445). Good humor being one of the key indicators of a good character in this novel, Partridge's infection of good humor shows that it might not be an inherent characteristic, but possibly something that can be transmitted under the right circumstances, like around a kitchen fire with good company. Hence Tom's value: with such a surfeit of good humor he tends to transmit better humor to others around him, increasing the general share of good humor, which we already know supports the judgment faculty, not to mention the added good that comes from enlivening "every conversation where he was present" (IX.v.446). No amount of infectious good humor can stop Partridge from revealing his essential nature as a buffoon, though, which he proceeds to do when he "converts" his hunger into thirst, enjoying a liquid dinner. In his facetiousness, he talks – and embellishes – far too much, and ends up getting Tom in trouble when he freely drops Sophia's name. By indulging the wrong

appetite, lapping up liquid courage rather than more wholesome, solid fare, Partridge converts his appetite to ill effect. Perhaps if he had obeyed his original, true appetite, he would have had the presence of mind to recognize Mrs. Honour and help Tom's cause with Sophia rather than scuttle it.

Tom's appetite and good humor, in the meantime, gives him an inappropriately voracious appreciation for both his decaying dinner, which "drest three Days before," handily "required nothing more from the Cook than to warm it over again," and Jenny Jones in her new guise as Mrs. Waters – the latter of which he will come to regret very much as having a potentially ruinous impact on his life (IX.iv.445). The leftovers, though, will have very little effect on him because food is just food in *Tom Jones*, the simpler the better. But a woman can and should not be just any other woman. The narrator describes the appetites at play here as hunger and love, the latter very much used ironically to Mrs. Waters' feelings towards Tom.

> To speak out boldly at once, she was in Love, according to the present universally received Sense of that Phrase, by which Love is applied indiscriminately to the desirable Objects of all our Passions, Appetites, and Senses, and is understood to be that Preference which we give to one Kind of Food rather than to another. But tho' the Love to these several Objects may possibly be one and the same in all Cases, its Operations however must be allowed to be different; for how much soever we may be in Love with an excellent Surloin of Beef, or Bottle of *Burgundy*; with a Damask Rose, or *Cremona* Fiddle; yet do we never smile, nor ogle, nor dress, nor flatter, nor endeavor by any other Arts or Tricks to gain the Affection of the said Beef (IX.v.447-8)

The narrator conspicuously misnames Mrs. Water's appetite for Tom as love, recalling Fielding's satirical definition of love in his "Modern Glossary" as a type of appetite, and thereby

showing how different in fact appetite is from love. He goes through definitional contortions in this passage, for instance when, "tho' the Love to these several Objects may *possibly* be the one and the same in all Cases," in fact if they are treated as such, it should *probably* be understood as such: a satirical treatment of the corrupted original word. The satire is both in the conflation between lust and love, and the mock-serious explanation about the different "operations," as ogling, dressing, and flattering, are corrupted understandings of how love manifests, too. This corruption is given an aristocratic English vocabulary, recalling the general negative associations with the upper aristocracy more generally in this novel, from Western's inherent dislike of noblemen, to Lady Bellaston's manipulativeness, to Mrs. Western's satirized veneration of her upper crust acquaintances. Here, the Sir-Loin of beef becomes the object of love, accompanied with that group's second-favorite drink, *Burgundy* (begrudgingly anglicized and second only to the even more anglicized name for claret), with the obligatory English rose centerpiece and fiddle music to accompany the meal of "love." Also quite aristocratic is the operation implied in this vision of eating the love-object, which corresponds to the narrator's description of society marriages as a hunt where the woman is the doe, "and rarely escapes a single Season from the Jaws of some Devourer or other" (XVII.iv.787-8).

The so-called love between Mrs. Waters and Tom, however, definitely is not a society match, and their coming together is much more reciprocal than the hunt metaphor, instead described as a battle where Mrs. Waters is allowed some agency even though she is compared to Tom's meal, and somewhat unfavorably, since he pays her no attention until he polishes off his meat. Her disappointed sigh, meant to draw his attention, becomes drowned out by the sound of Tom's bottle of ale opening, the coarse bubbles covering the sound of her voice. Tom's hunger temporarily supercedes Mrs. Waters' lust, hunger being described as Tom's only defense against

her: “For as Love frequently preserves from the Attacks of Hunger, so may Hunger possibly, in some Cases, defend us against Love” (IX.v.449). But one appetite satiated, the other may begin, showing how these appetites ultimately are contiguous: “his Dinner was no sooner ended, than his Attention to other Matters revived” (IX.v.446-7).

Fielding has a precedent for this contiguity of literal and metaphorical appetites in Galenic medicine, which had “a physiological explanation for the metonymy of eating and lovemaking: in the first place, they were analogous activities of intake and discharge; in the second place, they were sequential functions. The ‘spirit’ of semen (male and female) was a product of digestion, no less than fecal matter.”[143] Galenic medicine drew on the theory of the humours, which dates back to Hippocrates, and it was still a popular explanation for both physical and metaphysical complaints in the mid-eighteenth century, although Boyle’s discovery a century earlier that only blood circulated within the body, and was not joined by the other three humours, had dealt Galen’s theories a fatal blow. Unfortunately, space does not permit a more thorough analysis of the Galenic undertones of *Tom Jones* and its very sanguine hero, whose dominant humor of blood allows him to pass both in classical and modern physiological contexts. However, it probably suffices to note that Tom’s good humor and good looks being an indicator of his fundamentally good character derives directly from this classical physiological understanding of the absolute relationship between body and being, which in turn relates strongly back to materialist philosophies of the unity between body and spirit, such as Epicureanism. Humoral theory ultimately is determinist in its understanding of people and their temperaments, although its dietary prescriptions are an attempt to give every individual the ability to correct imbalances in their temperaments. Thus, the narrator’s eating metaphor and its connection to

[143] Appelbaum, *Aguecheek’s Beef, Belch’s Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections*, 232–33.

learning to be a better reader seems to be based on a Galenic understanding of influencing the mind through the body and its nourishment.

This novel treats appetite as an opportunity to influence an individual's temperament and fortune for better or worse, although usually the latter; the humor, quality, and size of those appetites are already fixed. This also explains why the fundamental goodness of Tom's appetite is key. Mere appetite is not enough because it seems to describe an essential function of the body rather than its quality. Mere appetite is a kind of capaciousness or ability to take in enormous quantities of what is set in front of him. But mere appetite only suffices so long as the stakes are low, such as at lunchtime. When appetites merge at the Upton Inn between his taste for ox flesh and his taste for Mrs. Waters, it results in him almost losing Sophia as well as an incest scare. At least, that is the usual narrative about what happens at the Upton Inn. It should be additionally noted that the outburst of bawdy appetites at the center of the novel actually has good long-term effects as it is also the impetus for Mrs. Waters to come back and set the record straight about the facts of Tom's birth in order to show that there was no incest between them at Upton, which in turn allows him to inherit Allworthy's estate and marry Sophia. In the case of the "love" between Mrs. Waters and Tom, pure appetite proves to be problematic, but it still ultimately is a force for changing Tom's life for the better as she reveals Tom's true parentage, which in turn makes him an eligible match for Sophia. The problem of whether or not it would have been better if Tom had only satisfied his hunger but not his lust at Upton parallels the problem of how to interpret the valences of appetitive reading in this novel, and how to weigh both its problems and benefits. What happens at Upton shows that, although there are substantial risks and problems in fulfilling all appetites all the time, following true appetites inevitably leads to an outcome more positive than negative.

Mere appetite is not the novel's ultimate value, but neither is true love, which the marriage plot emphasizes in its happy ending; rather, it is a balancing of natural appetites.[144] In their marriage, Sophia and Tom model a hermeneutic of appetite in how Sophia is the ideal reader and Tom, the epitome of good appetite. The union resulting from their appetite for each other allows them to be the successful outgrowths of their less successful originals, Western and Allworthy. Love is not enough to bring them together, however. They must first prove that Tom is worthy of Sophia, socially, financially, and appetitively. The sum of these three qualities the narrator calls "wisdom." Since he gains the first two qualities somewhat arbitrarily when the secret of his birth is revealed Tom proves to be the hero of this novel because his appetites become wise. Tom's large appetite becomes trained into a powerful force when he combines his innately good temperament with a variety of life experience, conversing with many men, and experiencing as many things as his appetite leads him to. Fielding's exact recipe for wisdom highlights the importance of the process relative to the ingredients:

> To say Truth, the wisest Man is the likeliest to possess all worldly Blessings in an eminent Degree: For as that Moderation which Wisdom prescribes is the surest Way to useful Wealth; so can it alone qualify us to taste many Pleasures. *The wise Man gratifies every Appetite and every Passion, while the Fool sacrifices all the rest to pall and satiate one.*
>
> It may be objected, That very wise Men have been notoriously avaricious. I answer, Not wise in that Instance. It may likewise be said, That the wisest Men have

[144] This goal of balancing the appetites is yet another echo of the Galenic goal of balancing the humors, which was thought to be achieved best by manipulating the diet.

been, in their Youth, immoderately fond of Pleasure. I answer, They were not wise then.

In the sentence I italicized, Fielding's narrator claims that gratifying all appetites all the time is the surest way of not overindulging a single appetite to the point of danger. This version of excess is presented, paradoxically, as a type of moderation. Wisdom is not necessarily an end but a temporary state, as the avaricious man who is otherwise wise is not "Not wise in that instance," presumably because he was intent on gratifying a single passion for money, but he is perhaps wise in other ways, at other times. Wisdom also seems the result of being immoderately fond of pleasure in one's youth, like Tom. The response that "they were not wise then" stresses the transitive nature of wisdom as well as a possible correlation with the word *then*. The experienced wise man is excused from his youthful hedonism because those excesses of appetite were foundational to that wisdom – he gratified every appetite as the recipe for wisdom mandates – and in so doing seems to graduate to merely moderate fondness of pleasure. Excesses balance each other out in this formulation, and they can be either negative, like avarice, or more positive, like a fondness for pleasure.

Yet this recipe seems easily abused, much like the narrator's description of prudence, particularly if wisdom is usually but not always outwardly marked by the possession of "all worldly Blessings" – a description that would seem to favor the avaricious man. However, "worldly blessings" is such an abstract description that its interpretation reveals more about the reader than the actual meaning of the passage. If the reader chooses to interpret it as solely wealth, it only indicates that the reader is foolishly attached to a single appetite for money. Rather, the emphasis on having a multiplicity of appetites and passions in this passage suggests that we must interpret "worldly blessings" quite loosely as anything – and everything – that leads

to sustainable pleasure. In Tom's world, those would include a happy marriage, children, prosperity, health, community, and a number of other factors. It is a definition for wisdom that is perhaps surprisingly utilitarian as it acknowledges the usefulness of some degree of personal resources in order to be able to taste so many different pleasures, but that wealth ultimately is linked to values of communal plurality.

The qualifiers of *moderation* in tasting pleasures, and *useful* wealth seem to attach the language of ethics to this discussion on the wisdom of gratifying appetite. Napier suggests how appetites might combine into prosocial ethics: "Ideally, in Fielding's view, we do not so much leave sensual pleasures behind us as combine them in a wise and fruitful way with prerogatives of a broader, more social and ethical kind."[145] This ethical progress seems to mirror Tom's journey from a lovable rake to Sophia's husband, a father, and benefactor in the larger community. Fielding's contemporary, David Hume, wrote of a compatible moral philosophy which "consists, somewhat paradoxically, in speaking to the sovereignty of unspeakable passions in common life."[146] As Hume explains in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738), "Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion, but a contrary impulse….We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason."[147] Fielding seems to agree with Hume that the only way to counter the deleterious effects of a passion (or appetite) is with another, and another. Reason resolves passion with no more success than prudence allays appetites. Instead, a large number of appetites are necessary in order to balance each other into a form of wisdom. Indeed, Saccamano reads a "moral mechanics" in Hume where "sentiments depart or remain in place, impart and communicate their force, enter into, resist, counterbalance,

[145] Napier, *Falling into Matter*, 91.
[146] Saccamano, "Parting with Prejudice: Hume, Identity, and Aesthetic Universality," 175.
[147] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 415.

or overpower and convert each other."[148] Similarly to how the resolution of appetite in *Tom Jones* ends with a portrayal of a community of readers, "At stake in taste and sentiment for Hume is the possibility of human community, a 'party of humankind,'" although it cuts across "social and national divisions" rather than across characters, implied readers and the narrator.[149] Appetites in Fielding combine, as do the people who have those appetites, who congregate around their common taste.

Despite the mention of moderation, the multiplying effect of the initial pleasure seems to be key to being able to transform it from selfishness eventually into something more philanthropic and generous to the community. This in turn suggests that the appetites Fielding privileges are ones which allows others to feel pleasure as well. "Multiplication of pleasure" should be understood not only in how different kinds of appetites (for food, sex, money, to help others) beget others, but also how these appetites are ones which proliferate within the context of a couple or a community. This is why Blifil's appetite are shown to be insufficient as they crave things which benefit him at the cost of others. Once again, Saccamano's reading of Hume offers a helpful formulation to explore the dynamics of how that works, within a discussion of aesthetic taste: "Hume ascribes the perversion of taste to an obstinacy of position" which is the result of failing "to depart from what Hume calls the 'natural position' of prejudice."[150] For Hume, perverted taste, like Blifil's desire for Sophia as if she were an ortolan, is the result of becoming frozen within one's original prejudices. Hume uses the affective language of *impulse* and *passion* to describe the dynamic that can jolt a person out of that original position, just as appetites in *Tom Jones* are a driving force for characters like Tom and Sophia to leave home and to come

[148] Saccamano, "Parting with Prejudice: Hume, Identity, and Aesthetic Universality," 184.
[149] Saccamano, 177.
[150] Saccamano, 184.

into contact with others in interesting and life-changing ways. Blifil, however, seems stymied in his "natural position," and only commits to following his appetites for Sophia and his inheritance up to a point, never fully departing from himself. He remains well within the bounds of his original position of prejudice, and thus he remains obstinate. The preeminence Fielding places on the pleasure of gratifying appetites also implies that a taste for sensuous pleasure plays a crucial role in developing wisdom. The novel suggests that without knowing the pleasure of gratifying appetite – each appetite – first-hand, it is impossible to feel sufficient motivation to provide others with the same feeling. Having pleasurable affective experiences in common seems to help characters connect with each other in a pro-social way that moves beyond Blifil's self-interest. Therefore, by indulging every appetite as a young man, Tom and these other eventually-wise men are training themselves to feel pleasure in helping others in the future.

This circuitous route to wisdom, similar to Tom's meanderings – full of excrescences, digressions, and other blots on a more efficient plan – might actually be the only way to wisdom since for Fielding, the "over-zealous (not to say, humorless) embrace of austerity threatens to turn virtues into vices", while

> [s]elf-interest fares just as poorly, for after debunking the traditional catalogue of virtues as obstacles in this-worldly happiness, the pursuit of our 'private vices' only brings, in Fielding's words, 'horror' and 'anxiety,' and finally, incapacitating satiation.[151]

It is interesting that Kelleher identifies austerity with self-interest, and contrasts them with Tom's epicurean moderation; the deprivation of the first seems to match the isolation of the second. Both represent a lack of connection, both to one's own body and one's community. And so, to connect with one's own body and its appetite seems to initiate a connection to the broader

[151] Kelleher, "The Glorious Lust of Doing Good," 181.

community, which in turn triggers generosity. To get to that point, the trick seems to be to indulge both frequently and moderately enough to satiate without falling into the incapacitation of excess, which, as Tiffany Potter observes, is precisely what Tom does as he "indulges his appetites, but… does not glut them."[152] As Potter argues, Tom offers a new, Georgian, archetype of the libertine, embodying epicurean values of moderation. It is this accumulation of appetitive experience through the regular *indulgence* of appetite that Fielding advocates. Fielding's prescription for wisdom can be understood as the refinement of the appetitive palate. Simple desire is the essential foundation, but also choosing the right object of desire is something that might be both taught and learned, so long as it is based in a fundamentally good humor.

Both Tom and the plot's success seem assured by how the ending offers a tidy package of all the loose ends, as well as in the near universal praise it has also received. But the intrusion of the narrator who ostensibly directs this near-perfect plot has been criticized almost as often, by venerable critics both contemporaneous and modern. While the narrator's persona might partly be a matter of taste, what all of these readers have hit on, although perhaps not appreciated fully, is that the conspicuousness of the narrator, his failures, and reassertions (and re-insertions), contain the possibility of the narrator's overthrow, too. He is a narrator who can be argued with, who already understands a hypothetical reader's power over the novel even as he disparages that implied reader and reasserts his own power. Thus, rather than reading the narrator and his prefaces as a failure for the novel, it is more interesting to read it as a possibility of the narrator being usurped, which is suggested at different points during the plot, such as during the episode of the Man of the Hill, but comes to pass, briefly, in the final breakfast scene where Mrs. Miller

[152] Potter, *Honest Sins*, 119.

and the other characters gathered pass the information of Tom and Sophia's marriage between themselves, without any narrator's help. Instead of a single usurper, such as when the Man temporarily took over the narration, this final usurpation is a community effort, echoing the values of openness and generosity which Tom's success confirms.

This moment at the end of the novel is brief and subtle but it stands out as a final moment that confirms a pattern of the narrator gradually incorporating other characters and the implied reader into his process of narration. There are several points prior to the ending when the narrator invites or allows others to step into his position of power over the plot and its interpretation. The longest is when the Man of the Hill narrates his own story, a usurpation which the narrator vehemently resents when he defends his right to rule over this novel in the prefatory chapter immediately afterwards, entitled, "Of those who lawfully may, and of those who may not write such Histories as this" (IX.i.428). There are also other, smaller moments, such as Mrs. Fitzpatrick's story, and Partridge's unsuccessful summary of all that has passed to Allworthy at the end, who can perhaps be understood as figures for the untrained and undisciplined narrator, following their appetite for dainty morsels and digressions where ever they lead.[153] And there are moments when, mid-narration, the narrator bids the reader to combine her sympathetic, imaginative powers with his to increase the effect of characters' emotions. "Her Sensations, however, the Reader's Heart (if he or she have any) will better represent than I can, if I had as many Mouths as ever Poet wished for, to eat, I suppose, those many Dainties with which he was so plentifully provided" (IV.v.152). The narrator bids readers to imagine themselves into Sophia's position in order to feel her own sensations, making the sympathetic link between the reader and character explicit at the same time that he asserts that the sympathetic link is stronger

[153] I am indebted to Professor Neil Saccamano for this reading.

than the effect of his narration. This link is described physiologically, as "sensations" located in the "Reader's Heart," connecting it to other bodily modes of understanding represented in this novel, like sagacity. The sympathy the reader has for the character, in other words, is rendered so strong by this bodily knowing as to make even the most detailed narration, the result of many mouths, unnecessary. Tellingly as well, the feast on offer is no longer for the reader, as it was in the opening chapter, but for the Poet, the image of the many mouths of poets singing transforms into many mouths stuffed full of dainties. After all, what better time for someone else to step into the narrator's role than when that narrator's mouth is full?

The final chapter confirms the pattern with two last, if temporary, abdications by this narrator who cannot talk with his mouth full, when one of the novel's best readers of Tom, Mrs. Miller, takes over his role of reporting plot developments and filling in gaps of knowledge. Sophia agrees to marry Tom immediately, on the condition of secrecy, and proceeds about her day, which includes visiting Mrs. Miller, "who no sooner saw *Sophia,* than she guessed every Thing that had happened" (XVIII.CTL.870). In this moment, Mrs. Miller reads Sophia so effectively that it is as if she had read the preceding chapters of the novel because she has guessed *everything* that happened. She supplants the narrator both by not needing to be informed of plot developments and in how she proceeds to disseminate the information to all interested parties. Sophia, meanwhile, continues about her business as characters tend to do in *Tom Jones*, unware of what is occurring around her at what happens to be, quite appropriately, a feast amongst all their various friends united in London. As appetites are fulfilled literally in the plot during a meal between friends and family, the narrative and its interpretation end in a community of readers:

> In Confidence of this Secrecy, she went through the Day pretty well, till the Squire, who was now advanced into the second Bottle, could contain his Joy no longer, but, filling out a Bumper, drank a Health to the Bride. The Health was immediately pledged by all present, to the great Confusion of our poor blushing *Sophia*, and to the great Concern of *Jones* upon her Account. To say Truth, there was not a Person present made wiser by this Discovery; for Mrs. *Miller* had whispered it to her Daughter, her Daughter to her Husband, her Husband, to his Sister, and she to all the rest (XVIII.CTL.872).

While Sophia may succeed as a reader, her attempt to narrate, that is to control knowledge about herself, fails. Instead, Western's characteristic sagacity means that he follows only his feelings and announces what he was supposed to keep secret. But Western, who before this had complained of always being led by Allworthy, turns out to have also been scooped by Mrs. Miller. In a plot where so much hinges on characters not communicating effectively – either because of hypocrisy, self-interested lies, misunderstandings, or simple ignorance – this one moment of quick and effective dissemination of true information stands out. Instead of the top-down model of the narrator controlling and dispensing information, Mrs. Miller, the daughter, husband, sister, and "all the rest," repeat information between themselves, allowing the narrative to move horizontally, between characters, the character of the implied reader perhaps being included in "all the rest."

A hermeneutic of appetite suggests that after a tavern keeper successfully elicits and offers fare to sate his customer's appetite, the eater must take over and begin to consume. This ending additionally suggests that the reader not only consumes but also makes the meal his own – the ending of the novel signals the moment of the reader's takeover from the narrator. This is because the reader only can take on the kind of hermeneutic task this novel demands after her

first reading of the novel because so many moments must be reinterpreted with the new understanding that Tom, rather than being a foundling, has been surrounded by his family all along. Likewise, in this ending emphasizing the community of readers which the plot has built, the "history" of Tom Jones is no longer a foundling. Only after the reader has proven her appetite by completing the novel is she rewarded with the incentive to keep reading precisely because the narrator has been so misleading during his intrusions throughout, keeping the reader's judgment off balance until the end. Thus, a hermeneutic of appetite describes how the narrator's intrusions not only create appetite for an initial reading via the cooking and eating analogies, but how that narrative control, even as it loosens at the end, elicits further appetitive reading even after it is complete: a feat comparable to Heliogabalus making his diner eat on forever, just as the narrator initially declared.

This reading emphasizes how appetite is not only a sensation of a lack, it is also a fulfillment (*OED*: "appetite, v." has the dual definitions: "to have an appetite for; to desire greatly, long for, seek after" and "to fulfil the desires of, satisfy"). Napier agrees that Fielding has an appetitive style: "Fielding's style, made dynamic by the continual shifts in point of view and instrumental in achieving that tone of irony for which he is celebrated, gains a fullness through an accretive, appetitive force…by a pausing and multiplication of registers and contexts."[154] Napier's description connects both meanings of appetite, as appetitive desire culminates in an accretive fulness. His observation also connects Fielding's appetitive style to the function of appetite more generally within the novel. Fielding's style is accretive until it reaches fulness just as the plot's motivating appetites must all be fulfilled before Tom achieves wisdom. Likewise, reading *Tom Jones* with appetite, as the narrator demands from the reader in

[154] Napier, *Falling into Matter*, 122.

the first chapter, is the practice of creating and allowing gaps of appetites while also constantly seeking fulfillment by reading every part until the end, resisting the urge to jump in to fill the numerous gaps (and ironies) that tempt but also elude the critic on the first reading, because that is the way the book is designed. The plot of *Tom Jones* turns out to resemble an ironic structure when after all the plot twists have been revealed, the reader desires to re-read it, keeping both the first and second readings in her head at once to fully appreciate it, like Preston's observation of the reader's necessary "dual response," and Bogel's description of the interpretive activity required by an ironic structure: "saying one thing that means two, acknowledging that the decision to prefer either of these meanings over the other cannot be scripted by the text itself but is a matter of interpretive activity."[155] [156] Appetitive interpretation suggests the active role the reader must take in forming the novel by how she interprets, and that she ultimately must eschew singularity in favor of reconciling a multiplicity of meanings within an interpretive community. Maggie Kilgour performs a suggestive reading of J. Hillis Miller, who imagines "The critic as Host" such that "Reading becomes a new form of communion, involving a triple reciprocity, for not only do the readers share the text among them, but, as it informs them individually and unites them as a group, so each transforms it."[157] This conclusion is similar to Stanley Fish's observation that "the act of recognizing literature" does not "issue from an independent and arbitrary will; rather, it proceeds from a collective decision" made by a "community of readers."[158] For Fish, this interpretive community exists from the beginning, but in *Tom Jones,* the creation of an interpretive community that can rival the narrator in dominance over the

[155] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 67.
[156] Preston, *The Created Self; the Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 98.
[157] Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism*, 16; Miller, "The Critic As Host."
[158] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, 11.

interpretation of the text is not a preexisting force but comes into being gradually by the fulfillment of characters' and the implied reader's appetites, perhaps in order to demonstrate conclusively its dominance over isolated, antisocial appetitive interpretation.

For Fielding, appetites exist to urge their own fulfillment, and the more satisfactorily they are fulfilled, the sooner the appetite re-appears – a virtuous rather than a vicious cycle given the link of a multiplicity of appetites to wisdom. Just so, as Fielding pursues the logic of his overarching metaphor, the cooking and eating analogies, he shows how a novel urges multiple readings by multiple readers, which demotes the omniscient narrator insofar as the community of readers take control of the story's interpretation. This multiplicity of readings is necessary to inform and continue a hermeneutic circle where each additional reading adds information that will aid the next reading, which can uncover still more in the next. The effect and meaning of multiple readings in *Tom Jones* is also similar to what Barthes describes in S/Z, a book which resonates in many ways with Fielding's hermeneutic of appetite.

For Barthes, "the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text." This opening proposition to S/Z recalls the playfulness and irony of the opposite opening proposition in *Tom Jones* that makes the reader a customer to the author.[159] Like in *Tom Jones*, Barthes' anti-consumer vision of literature hinges on concepts of multiplicity: re-readings, plural interpretations, and a multiplicity of reversible structures. This is contrasted against "the commercial and ideological habits of our society, which would have us 'throwaway' the story once it has been consumed ('devoured'), so that we can then move on to another story, buy another book."[160] Barthes and Fielding's consumption

[159] Barthes, *S/Z*, 4.
[160] Barthes, 16–17.

metaphors and interpretive solutions, both founded in notions of pluralities, are companions to each other. While Fielding's interpretive solution stresses the goodness and redemption of a sociable bond between characters, the narrator/author, and the reader, Barthes stresses the necessity of multiple readings to form "a plural text," which the reader helps to form and even write: "The more plural the text, the less it is written before I read it."[161] Fielding and his narrator are well aware of this strong interpretive power inherent to the reader of a literary text, and his narrator's interjections and "systematic use of digressions" simultaneously draw attention to that fact, challenge it, and permit it to become even more true than before as the interjections and digressions only multiply further meaning. Barthes stresses that rereading is "no longer consumption but play," and I believe Fielding would agree, as seen on his ending on a wedding feast reuniting friends and family, where none of the precise foods or drinks are emphasized, but Tom's revealed identity encourages his readers to reevaluate and reread everything that has passed before with a new and better understanding.[162]

CONCLUDING WITH A BELLYACHE,

OR, THERE IS NO PERFECT FULFILLMENT OF APPETITE.

This novel offers a significant hermeneutical payoff. After it is repeatedly shown that the ability to read Tom correctly is the mark of good reading, the reader is offered an ending where interpretation finally is complete because Tom's parentage and hence his true identity and place in the world is known; blood lines become incontrovertible proof of the novel's inner logic. On

[161] Barthes, 17, 10.
[162] Barthes, 17.

realizing his mistaken judgment of Tom, Allworthy connects the two when he confesses to Mrs. Miller, "I was as ignorant of his Merit as of his Birth" (XVIII.ix.849). Such a decisive ending provides a clear rubric by which to judge the most idealized kind of reader, one like Mrs. Miller or Sophia, who trust their instinctive preference for Tom, letting that guide their rationalization and interpretation of his actions, even when he has gone astray. It is a kind of reading that demands extraverted and generous-hearted participation with the object being read, recalling somewhat Bentley's conjectural criticism and Western's sagacity insofar as they result in a personal – and personalized – connection with the text. However, those modes are ultimately eschewed in favor of a community of readers who collectively interpret, sometimes to the extent of usurping the narrator who, along with the reader, often seems to be just another character especially since the narrator, character, and implied reader eventually are revealed to be equals in the novel's interpretive community. That interpretive community completes the reading of Tom's character, as Tom's pursuit of all of his many, extraverted appetites paradoxically promises to lead him into wisdom and a happy ending. The novel thus repeatedly insists on the importance of excrescences, digressions, and imperfections, and of interpreting in a way that values these features as well.

If the plot works towards Tom and Sophia's union, representing the synthesis of Allworthy's prudence with Western's sagacity, it is a result that emphasizes human as well as narrative imperfection through the necessity of what might otherwise be deemed wasteful excrescences through both Tom's appetitive meanderings as well as the narrator's interjections and tangential episodes such as the Man of the Hill's tale. This is not to say that the happy ending of *Tom Jones* represents a perfect, Hegelian synthesis of dichotomies. Rather, these analogies suggest a thoroughly human, digestive combination that is always messy and always

wasteful, even as it sustains all life. The necessary literary "waste" includes the inherent irony of the analogy between writing and cooking, as suggested since Plato's original critique of rhetoric as mere cookery, and the inherent limits of appetitive capacity, which threaten the author's feast.

A hermeneutic of appetite furthermore is appropriate for a book so invested in the reinforcement between the intellectual and moral capacities with the body. Napier argues that Fielding's heroes and readers "appear to possess bodies that are as demanding as their minds, so that reading and eating, writing and the preparation of consumption of victuals, 'tasting,' 'spicing' – mental and culinary entertainment tout court – are shown from the initial chapter of *Tom Jones* to involve energies that are strikingly the same."[163] So from this positive interpretation of appetite emerges the equation between good interpretation and good eating, where for Tom it is not simply a matter of having enough appetite that any dish, woman, or indeed novel will do, but rather treating appetite as an educable, bodily wisdom obtained through the gratification of all appetites in a generous and extraverted manner, which is shown to be superior to the type of prudential calculation and isolated withholding represented by the novel's villain, Blifil. The narrator celebrates bodily forms of knowledge by engaging the reader's imagination to aid him in his work from the start, the imagination being understood as a physical process inherent to all bodies, thus establishing a physiological link between text and reader which the narrator reinforces through the cooking and eating analogies at the heart (or belly) of this book. Bodily forms of knowing are continually reinforced as the basis of a successful hermeneutic of appetite in examples including Western's sagacity, Sophia's intuition, and Allworthy's epicurean pursuit of the pleasure of helping others.

[163] Napier, *Falling into Matter*, 122.

By subverting the value of prudence, which attempts to harmonize being with seeming, Fielding instead prioritizes honest, messy appetite, even if at first it is large and indiscriminate. In fact, one might be able to say that through the example of Tom, Fielding insists on the importance of indiscriminate eating, at least at first, which might seem a strange lesson to take away from a book that depicts the development of good morals. But, as Napier writes, "If, in *Tom Jones*, the body commits or fuels acts of indiscretion" these "improprieties not only appear to illustrate a passionate, generous nature of which Fielding approves, but also…make[s] possible the higher moral opportunity of taking responsibility for one's actions, without which exercise one is not, for Fielding, fully human."[164] It is not enough to appear good. True goodness in *Tom Jones* results from an alignment of one's impulses, bodily, moral, and intellectual, and therefore in the hermeneutical payoff of when all of Tom's appetites match the expectations of him as Allworthy's heir.

Part of Blifil's problem seems to be that prudence wants to deny or delay the body's appetites and protect the object being read rather than the reader. While prudence is not a wholly negative value, it is in so far as it represents a denial of the body's true appetites and obscures the object being read rather than aiding the reader in her interpretation. Blifil's example shows that Bell is thus only partially correct in his view that "Fielding fondly regards bodily functions however indecorous or improper; appetites are inevitable, normal, and natural."[165] Blifil's appetites are the exception in their sadism and selfishness, and although they often are understood as "unnatural," they seem to be as innate as any other. Blifil abides mostly inside his own, plotting head, engaging with others only insofar as he sees a direct benefit, while Tom's

[164] Napier, 111.
[165] Bell, *Henry Fielding*, 2.

appetitive meanderings consistently land him in trouble and challenge him to change for the better. Tom is willing to try anything appealing to his appetites, and joyfully and generously partakes of the entire buffet of life. While it is a problem that his appetites are initially indiscriminate, this seems to be a necessary step towards the ideal of wisdom because Blifil's and Allworthy's counterexamples of prudence show how impossible to discriminate and judge correctly – good intentions or no – without the ability to discriminate between pretense and worthy aspirations.

Fielding can build and sustain a hermeneutic of appetite because his novel is so delicious and ambitious. However, it promises more than it can possibly ever deliver since a literary menu does not actually allow the reader to pick and choose what to read. Instead it does emphasize the multiple threads weaving together to for the whole story. In novels, as in life, you must take the whole turtle, the whole plot, and the perspectives of all the characters. But even the value of wholeness is subverted by the digressions and interjections of an imperfect narrator and his imitators such as the Man of the Hill, intentional blots which challenge the implied reader and other reader-characters into becoming better interpreters. That is why the unredeemed villainy of the novel's other potential heir and suitor to Sophia, Blifil, stands out as such a problem and test case in Fielding's appetitive universe. What happens when a reader's innately good appetite cannot be called upon, or how does one read something that does not elicit any appetite? Does appetite need to be the basis for all good reading? Or is it ever a good thing to read with dispassion, or some other bodily reaction than desire, or the imaginative impulse? Making an unchronological move to Swift now helps to answer some of these questions, especially in how to read distasteful subjects, like Blifil's unrepentant villainy, with something other than mere

disgust. Swift's "shiterature"[166] does anything but make light of excrescences, be they heirs like Blifil or more literal turds, instead showing readers how to train a keener aesthetic eye that seeks out rather than evades detail, grounding readers once again, like Fielding does, in the importance of close-reading even as the literature appeals to strong bodily instincts, be it appetite or disgust.

[166] Smith, *Between Two Stools*.

SWIFT, MONTAGU, AND THE LIMITS OF CLOSE READING WASTE

FROM APPETITE TO DISGUST

The previous chapter on Henry Fielding's hermeneutics of appetite in *Tom Jones* ended with the problem of assuming the reader's appetite as given, turning that appetite, not to mention the assumption that innate appetites tend to be good, into a precarious precondition for being an ideal reader. This chapter addresses the following problems in such a hermeneutic of appetite: how does one read something that does not elicit positive appetite but rather disgust? Does desire need to be the basis for all good reading? How might one read attentively when offended, rather than simply turning away? Jonathan Swift's thematic preoccupation with excrement and other (usually bodily) waste provides answers to these questions. These materials stand in for that which inspires disgust – that is, the opposite of appetite's bodily desire. These questions put to one side the issue of there not being any interest at all, neither positive nor negative, even though disinterest is a common enough reaction to waste. Since Swift describes the dross so meticulously, and consistently portrays characters fascinated by it, indifference is not a reaction permitted in his texts, as this chapter will explore.

Just as Fielding depicts literal and figurative appetites of all kinds in *Tom Jones* while also eliciting it in his reader in order to train it, so Jonathan Swift does with appetite's opposite: disgust. Swift provokes disgust with undiscriminating appetites, reminiscent of the moral disgust Tom provokes in some readers for his undiscriminating sexual appetite prior to its eventual training into fidelity. However, Swift's characters' appetites tend to be more literal: "There was nothing that rendered the Yahoos more odious than their undistinguishing appetite to devour

every Thing that came in their way." Gulliver's reaction to the Yahoos eating anything and everything might also serve as a mirror for the reader, disgust being a strong, visceral emotion that responds almost as well to the suggestion as to the actual material. Not that Swift lacks for material; he revels in dandruff piles, sweat rivulets, armpit stains, grease, makeup stains, shit, piss, vomit, and raw sewage. His characters also do not lack for complexity in their reaction to this brew of human filth, and that is where Swift offers a solution to the reader challenged for appetite: shifting from an attitude of disgust into fascination, aestheticization, and sometimes even Rabelaisian revelry. Swift's narrators and characters consistently find excrement and excrescences to be a powerful impetus to close read.

As the subject of waste matter might suggest, however, close reading is not always an unambiguous good in Swift, as opposed to the way I had been taught and have continued to teach it in English courses: as a fundamental skill of literary criticism that cannot be over-exercised. Yet in Swift there seems to be a limit to close reading, and not just because Swift doesn't have the formalist vocabulary of "close reading." This is seen in how his characters abuse the critical postures as self-serving over-readers (such as the brothers in *A Tale of a Tub*), or become contaminated by the waste they feel compelled to read (such as Cassinus and Strephon). Even inanimate objects whose jobs it is to clean and illuminate darkness become polluted by their efforts (such as the broomstick in "A Meditation upon a Broom-stick" and the "Lanthorns" in "The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit"); waste is a product of every process, including getting rid of waste. Waste tests literary and aesthetic limits, particularly for the interpreter on whom it places great demands.

Calling attention to how Swift questions the suitability and effectiveness of what is often acknowledged as the most powerful tool in the interpreter's kit – close reading – may seem an

odd tactic at the beginning of my own close reading of Swift, and merits further explanation. First, by close reading I mean the practice of being hyper-attentive to subtleties in language, including, but not limited to word choice, syntax, diction, rhetorical tropes, visual placement on the page, patterns in phrasing or themes, and historical precedents for these choices to better understand the text at hand. It can be as simple as critically analyzing word choice. Take, for example, the difference between the phrases, "the waves *lap* against the shore" and "the waves *break* against the shore." Typically, the verb *to lap* refers to the gentle, quick, yet also sandpapery licks of a cat or dog drinking. The first description of the waves consequently conjures a gentler, caressing sea setting than the violence of waves that *break*.[167] Close reading is thus the beginning of interpretation, but also the beginning of criticism – in the sense authors like Fielding, Swift, and Pope rebuke – the discovering of faults.

A motley crew of critics, bogeymen really, populate Swift's texts. Like Fielding's narrator in *Tom Jones,* Swift's narrators also often go off on diatribes against critics, which we can likewise mine as a guide to bad reading – and extrapolate its opposite (assuming it's reversible). His description in *The Battel of the Books* is typical: a malignant Deity, call'd *Criticism*…dwelt on the Top of a snowy Mountain *Nova Zembla;* there *Momus* found her extended in her Den, upon the Spoils of numberless Volumes half devoured.[168] Conjuring a scene from ancient Rome decayed with decadence, Criticism personified (and feminized) lounges in front of her meal of books, of which she has ruined the whole by taking a bite or at least licking every single one, like a spoiled child who wants no one else to enjoy a treat. The "Spoils" of these books suggests that "Criticism" has the power to wreak havoc on the volumes

[167] Adapted from Lena Karian's classroom handout "Reading in the Discipline of English: Close Reading," Cornell Department of English.
[168] Swift, *The Writings of Jonathan Swift; Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Criticism*, 386.

and also has plundered her enemy in a war she has presumably won. Both readings emphasize her power, capriciousness, and penchant for destruction. But by making it a woman waging war, Swift makes clear it is a battle of wit and emotion rather than physical prowess. She appears insensitive and cold in her snowy surroundings, and we are told she is related to ignorance (her father and husband), pride (her mother), opinion (her sister), and has birthed noise, impudence, dullness, vanity, positiveness, pedantry, and ill-manners. She is both a "malignant" deity and a creature that dwells in a "den," and thus ruled mostly by instinct, not intellect nor good taste.

Books never seem to be used for their intended purpose by these satirized critics – that is, reading. Instead, we very often get images of critics devouring books, to name a few beyond this passage, some of which we've already seen: Reynold's famous portrait of Samuel Johnson which prefaced the first chapter of this dissertation, or indeed the preface of *Tom Jones*, or in *A Tale of a Tub* (1710), where the narrator paraphrases the ancient critic Pausanias who testifies against his own kind, namely that critics "*were a Race of Men, who delighted to nibble at the Superfluities, and Excrescencies of Books*."[169] Seeing the critics here delight in nibbling brings us back to the original question of this chapter, suggesting that appetite is fundamental to reading even for those who seek out that which usually would provoke disgust rather than craving. For critics at least, the "excrescencies" are precisely the delicacies they prefer. The diction of the passage makes the critics sound like decadent aristocrats with perverted appetites incapable of enjoying solid fare (a common critique of the French at the time). But it is appetite all the same, no matter where it is directed or how it is disguised.

According to Swift, the malevolent, devouring instincts of critics consistently lead them to seek out faults, that is to say, the excremental in literature.

[169] Swift, 314. Emphasis in original.

> In their common perusal of Books, singling out the Errors and Defects, the Nauseous, the Fulsome, the Dull, and the Impertinent with the Caution of a Man that walks thro' *Edenborough* Streets in a Morning, who is indeed as careful as he can, to watch diligently, and spy out the Filth in his Way, not that he is curious to observe the Colour and Complexion of the Ordure, or take its Dimensions, much less to be padling in, or tasting it: but only with a Design to come out as cleanly as he may. These men seem, tho' very erroneously, to have understood the Appellation of *Critick* in a literal Sence.[170]

The passage meanders along with the critic winding his way down the street. It catalogues both the reader's and the walker's concerns with a naturalist's thoroughness: the errors and defects, the nauseous, the fulsome, the dull, the impertinent, not to mention the colour, complexion, and dimension. Around the same time, Swift writes about metropolitan muck in "A Description of a City Shower" (1710), from a perspective not of minute observation – or its avoidance – but rather from the cloud-level and down with the rain where London's social and physical milieu becomes leveled in the gutters where waste mixes as freely as the people on the streets yet still remains specific in the morass:

> Sweepings from Butchers Stalls, Dung, Guts, and Blood,
> Drown'd Puppies, stinking Sprats, all drench'd in Mud,
> Dead Cats and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood. (ll. 61 -63)[171]

A "City Shower" ignores the potential beauties of the weather patterns above in order to focus on the gross particulars which eventually swirl into the larger flood. A decade later, John Gay would have his hero take a similar walk down London streets – noticing, avoiding, and celebrating filth

[170] Swift, 311.
[171] Swift, 520.

and its representative goddess Cloacina – in his long poem, *Trivia*. But Gay's *flâneur* traces lineages and mythologies in the mire, moving from the gross particular to grander connections, while Swift's myopic critic and the perspective in "City Shower" both emphasize the discontinuity and particularity of the individual elements comprising usually undifferentiated compounds like ordure or the flood of rain. Swift thus eschews larger perspectives to instead show the horror and disgust that come from looking closely.

The unexpected options of "paddling in, or tasting it" make it sound like the critic prefers filthy streets more than clean ones, just like the bookseller wholeheartedly participating in the games of Pope's *Dunciad* who "flies, and wades, and hops" through "a lake, / Which Curl's Corinna chanc'd that morn to make" (II.64, 70).[172] With a playful tone, the narrator gives the critic the benefit of the doubt that the critic does not give the text. The effect, though, is to draw attention to the critic's absorption in the filth of the street. Whatever his intentions (to paddle in or neatly avoid it), the fact remains the same that he very closely resembles a coprophiliac. It appears that the critic's primary sin was not so much his interest in the filth as his repudiation of the desire "to come out as cleanly as he may." If he indulged his curiosity and actually paid attention to the filth's color, odor, and dimensions, he at least might learn something worthy of the close attention he paid to his first impression. Swift thus aligns those who only want to come out as cleanly as they may from their encounter with the excremental with merely critics in the derogatory sense; however coprophiliacs provide exemplary interpretation, an association which continues throughout his scatological works. The difference between the damned critic absorbed by filth and the coprophiliac seems to be the latter's lingering care and desire, and the shock value of the subject matter making those motivations even more notable.

[172] Williams, *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, 324.

Becoming a coprophiliac is not an enticing recipe for becoming a better interpreter to most, however. So what's a well-intentioned critic to do? Are readers and writers always going to be at odds? As the narrator of *Tom Jones* taught us, readers cannot help turning into critics, and critics apparently have impulses that tend towards the gross, literal, and condemnatory. But is there an alternate way to harness these tendencies so that they might produce a more interesting reading that finds more than just flaws and faults? The narrator opens the preface of *A Tale of a Tub* by suggesting that providing copious amounts of material to close read might be one solution – to keep the critics occupied with busy work. The narrator also suggests recording the deliberations of "a Grand Committee" who close read a tale of a ship which tries to distract whales by tossing out a tub as a toy to keep them from doing harm. The "Grand Committee" quickly decides that the whale represents Hobbes's work of political philosophy *Leviathan*, but "how to analyze the *Tub*, was a Matter of difficulty; when after long Enquiry and Debate, the literal Meaning was preserved." Now, literal interpretations of metaphors in Swift's writings usually have a satirical purpose and the Grand Committee clearly is being ridiculed, but the passage takes an unexpected turn when the narrator immediately reinterprets the Grand Committee's decision that likewise anyone "tossing and sporting with the *Commonwealth*" could "be diverted from that Game by a *Tale of a Tub*." The narrator re-interprets the Grand Committee's literal-minded understanding of how to save the commonwealth, and instead gives potential troublemakers a lengthy story which has nothing to do with actual tubs, but accomplishes its goal all the same with a meandering morality tale full of digressions. In effect, the narrator captures the spirit but not the letter of the Grand Committee's literal interpretation. In so doing, the narrator treats all readers of his tale as if they were potential traitors of the

commonwealth, but he also seems to regard them as "true critics" who take delight in only the superfluities and excrescencies of a work.

The most important and consistent issues in Swift are the power of language, perspective, and the problem of interpretation – and not just in these texts about waste and disgust, even though waste and disgust remain a serious concern. My analysis here follows Deborah Baker Wyrick's, who reveals an implicit theory of language in Swift, calling it an "excremental semiotics" that "guard[s] the precarious integrity of the text by exposing the follies of interpretation." Wyrick observes that Swift "specifically sets up as an analogue to irresponsible and unauthorized criticism" the "uncomfortable position of deciphering excrement."[173] I agree with Wyrick's view that Swift's writings on waste and the position of disgust clearly take aim at the position of the interpreter. I also think Wyrick is right that Swift's excremental texts must understand them as a "fragmented, chiasmic allegory both of reading and writing," an observation that addresses whether or not Swift's "shiterature" is a single unit.[174] These particular texts function as disparate, disjointed stories, all deeply interested in the problems of reading and writing even if their message is neither completely consistent nor contiguous.

Wyrick and I differ nevertheless in how much power we perceive the interpreter to have. Wyrick places it primarily with the author by emphasizing how disgust will deter many readers from exercising their power of interpretation. She reads Swift's scatology as a self-reflective allegory of writing that inherently excludes the reader:

> But excremental words are more than an allegory of reading. They are also an allegory of writing, writing as a function of fallen language that exhibits its own corruptions lest an

[173] Wyrick, *Jonathan Swift and the Vested Word*, 125.
[174] Wyrick, 119.

> author forget the mortality of human products as well as human beings, yet writing that paradoxically purifies itself. Excrementalization joins Swift's other textocentric tactics in an arsenal of complex, often covert self-authorizations designed to preserve and protect his textually vested interests.[175]

While Wyrick seems to believe that Swift's "self-authorizations" actually do "preserve and protect his textually vested interests," and thus that excrementalization as an allegory of writing reflects back only on him and his own texts, I am more skeptical that Swift believes he can contain the authority of authorship to himself. Rather, Swift clearly recognizes the threat to the text posed by interpretation. As Neil Saccamano writes about *A Tale of a Tub*, "allegoresis entails for Swift an ethics of interpretation as the illicit exercise of force" and "an act of violence against the authority of authorial intention and the rule of textual evidence."[176] Paradoxically, this forceful violence of the act of interpretation originates within the text itself; Swift's texts enact the violence of interpretation against themselves. Interpretation and the violence it represents still remains illicit, though, because it represents the extratextual element and thus remains outside the order of the words on the page. Swift's overt ploys to destabilize the interpreter in return – such as in the *Tale*'s playful textual gaps or the less obvious gaps in perspectives between character, narrator, and reader – acknowledge the reader to be a worthy adversary, and that the only way to contain interpretive power is to dissipate its agency in a confusingly disjointed space.

The clearest place to see this dissipative effect of the reader's interpretive power is in Swift's ellipses and gaps in *A Tale of a Tub*, where the disjointed space occurs both in the textual

[175] Wyrick, 95.
[176] Saccamano, "Knowledge, Power, Allegory: Swift's Tale and Neoclassical Literary Criticism," 305–6.

gaps and the narrative layer between the text of the Tale and the "Bookseller" who edits and annotates it. In "The Bookseller to the Reader," he gives a history of a text, disclaiming any knowledge of the author or his intentions for both the work at large but also, particularly, the textual gaps: "whether the Work received his last Hand, or, whether he intended to fill up the defective Places, is likely to remain a Secret."[177] Yet he goes on to offer a series of strong and contradictory opinions about those "defective Places," intended to guide the reader in her interpretation. In one of the Bookseller's first notes, he claims that these textual gaps are ways in which the author plays with his reader. They are a breed apart from accidental physical defects typical in ancient manuscripts, eaten by worms, flames, or time, but rather a narrative device for the author's own pleasure.

> Here is pretended a Defect in the Manuscript, and this is very frequent with our Author, either when he thinks he cannot say anything worth Reading, or when he has no mind to enter on the Subject, or when it is a Matter of little Moment, or perhaps to amuse his Reader (whereof he is frequently very fond) or lastly, with some Satyrical Intention.[178]

The defect is announced by this facetious editor as "pretended" from the start – "and this is very frequent with our Author" – who seems to have no other duty in writing than his own amusement and sometimes the reader's too – if he's feeling fondly towards her. The space of his text is his own to fill, or not, as he will, although his reasons for choosing which way to go seem instructive. He will only write if he has something worth reading, if he has the subject on his mind, or if he thinks a reader will gain pleasure from it. These gaps are thus announced as meaningless gaps – there is nothing there because the author has nothing to say. It is merely, as

[177] Swift, *The Writings of Jonathan Swift; Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Criticism*, 278.
[178] Swift, 296.

the text itself announces, a "*Hiatus in the MS*," filled with suggestive but ultimately meaningless asterisks – if the reader accepts the annotation's authority. However, this initial footnote is at war with counterexamples showing how these gaps might also be incredibly meaningful. Another elision seems to be hiding lines of text rather than merely filling space to create a suggestive void because it runs for a shorter, more specific length in the text (about a line and a half in my edition), consists of a series of dashes of the kind usually deployed to hide the characters' true names or (more likely in this case) lewd content, and is interrupted in the middle by "*Heark in your Ear*," as if the author was pantomiming a whisper. However, the editor glosses, "I cannot conjecture what the Author means here, or how this Chasm could be fill'd, tho' it is capable of more than one Interpretation."[179] Previously so eager to authorize the meaning of a much less suggestive gap, the editor now avoids providing an interpretation. While his annotation is quite literally true – of course a gap could be filled with more than one possibility – it also feels more evasive due to the conjunction "tho'" which suggests a contradiction between two clauses which are in fact complementary. If the textual chasm is capable of being filled with one or more interpretation, surely the editor might conjecture one or several. However, the editor seems determined to leave ambiguous interpretive moments to the reader. The disjointedness of this wide open interpretive space comes from how in fact *all* of the textual gaps, if they are unknown to anyone but the absent author, must also be ambiguous moments; however, the editor plays with the reader just as he earlier claimed the author was playing with her, perhaps with some "Satyrical Intention." Swift thus levels the textual authority of the facetious author with the facetious editor, while demonstrating to his reader that any would-be authority who claims totalizing knowledge must be treated as suspect.

[179] Swift, 355.

Thus, my argument ultimately focuses on how these texts train the reader to become an even stronger interpreter. Where Fielding doesn't so much train the appetite as emphasize the need for a proliferation of appetites, Swift instead shows that the interpreter's strongest power is in aestheticizing obtuse material (like waste) in such a way that it becomes a creative act. Swift's facetious bookseller / editor does something like that in *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, where he suggests an even greater possibility of immense meaning being contained in these textual gaps at the same time that he draws attention to the intention in creating them. This time, the bookseller claims that this particular text came into his hands "perfect and entire," but he felt compelled to retrench "those Parts that might give most Offence," venturing "to publish the Remainder."[180] He thus creates a new text that intentionally offers fewer answers than compelling questions. For instance, the note to an impressively succinct paragraph-length elision says, "Here the whole Scheme of spiritual Mechanism was deduced and explained, with an Appearance of great reading and observation; but it was thought neither safe nor Convenient to print it."[181] The relatively short length of the missing explanation and note that prioritizes safety (understandable) and convenience (less so) over Truth seem to taunt a reader eager for a comprehensive – and comprehensible – answer to metaphysical questions. Rather, Swift shows how the text has been crafted to create spaces where meaning is irrefutably plural because there is no literal text on which to rest a definite interpretation. Moreover, the way in which Swift's playful editor wipes out the text at will insists on the inherent malleability of any text – not only in suggestive voids. In my reading, the interpreter retains the final, powerful right of reception**.**

[180] Swift, 398.
[181] Swift, 407.

This is evident because of, not in spite of, Fielding and Swift's criticisms and misdirections of the reader-critic.

This effort to train the reader reveals from a deep mistrust of the interpreter. Like Fielding, however, Swift recognizes that he must yield interpretive power to the reader, not least because, as Lady Mary Montagu's response poem shows so explicitly, the fate of the read object and its critical reception already belong to the reader. The efforts of Fielding and Swift to train the reader-critic through appeals to visceral motivations like appetite and disgust, which are more powerful and consistent than reason. As Gurr has remarked, "the insistence upon anality, excrement, human stench, and bestiality can thus be read as a direct response drastically countering the period's ideal of humans as remarkably non-corporeal, purely intellectual or purely sentimental beings."[182] Fielding and Swift appeal to their implied reader's appetite and disgust rather than their intellect and sentiment as a means to make their lessons in literary appreciation and reasonable criticism salient. They both display a wary skepticism that reason can rule stronger, bodily reactions, and so they offer strategies to harness these bodily reactions and train them, as seen in moments when either their characters interpret or the narrator interacts with an implied reader.

Since neither Fielding nor Swift (nor any other author) can predict or otherwise control their actual readers' thoughts and reactions to their texts, they sometimes address an "implied reader," and create characters who model interpretation within the text. They take aim at their reader-critics because when waste enters literature and art it is up to the interpreter whether it will remain an *objet d'art* or whether its meaning will be confined by its material reality. This is

[182] Gurr, "Worshipping Cloacina in the Eighteenth Century: Functions of Scatology in Swift, Pope, Gay, and Sterne," 130.

what happens when the prostitute in Montagu's response poem to Swift, "The Reasons that Induced Dr. S.[wift] to write a Poem called 'The Lady's Dressing Room,'" retorts, "I'm glad you'll write, / You'l furnish paper when I shite." (l. 88-89). By refusing to recognize the poem as anything more than the paper on which it is written, and then compounding that denial of its aesthetic status with a threat to make waste of its physical nature, Montagu's prostitute epitomizes the threat of the interpreter in Fielding and Swift. The main difference between these two authors' reaction is tone: "Swift's treatment of readers does not, like Pope's or Fielding's or Gibbon's, invite solidarity, but tends to generate a downbeat readerly discomfort. If there is an element of intimacy, it is that of a personal quarrel."[183] Indeed, Montagu's poem clashes with Swift's in a battle for interpretive supremacy, and that tension animates the rest of this chapter's analysis, finding an abject connection between waste, women, and the challenges of interpreting without desire. Especially in Swift's texts that quarrel with women, we come to the crux of the issue of interpreting waste: while Swift's feminine figures of waste resemble Kristevean abjectness they also open up the possibility of the aestheticization and creative renewal of the read object that originally inspired disgust.

STREPHON, KRISTEVA, AND THE MOTHER

The connection between the female figure and excrement has sexist undertones (and overtones) to be sure, but it is also about something other than gender politics, which helps to explain the fiercely unresolved debate about whether Swift is misogynist or not. Norman Brown wrote an excellent essay that originally exculpated Swift from the charge of misogyny, arguing

[183] Rawson, "The Mock-Edition Revisited: Swift to Mailer," 236.

that Swift is best understood in a Freudian sense, an assessment which has influenced the argument of this chapter.[184] Margaret Doody and Melinda Rabb argue in a slightly different vein, but to similar effect, that Swift had very positive and supportive relationships with lots of women and advocated for their education and writing – and thus surely should not be understood as a misogynist.[185] Yet other critics like Laura Brown (no relation to Norman) – not to mention Wendy Weise, Felicity Nussbaum, and Tita Chico – observe that no matter the interesting historical titbits about Cloacina, the Roman goddess of the sewers, nor Swift's strong personal and intellectual relationships with the women in his life, it would be naïve to excuse his obviously misogynistic rhetoric as anything else.[186] This chapter agrees with the latter view the most, especially because Montagu's reaction to Swift shows that it is not an anachronistic judgment. However, I would also like to argue that the question of Swift's misogyny is neither the most important nor the most interesting aspect of these misogynistic verses.

I would like to linger a bit longer with the notion that there is a semiotics embedded in these misogynistic and excremental texts by Swift, and use Kristeva's psycholinguistic conception of abjection as a framework to better understand it. Abjection, as Kristeva describes it, reveals key dynamics in Strephon's reaction to Celia's waste matter and connects together bodily effluvia, reactions of horror and disgust, and a rejection of female sexuality and the mother figure. As Mary Jacobus synthesizes,

> Defined as a kind of narcissistic crisis, 'abjection' is Kristeva's term for the precarious casting out or primal repression which marks the earliest emergence of the signifying

[184] Brown, *Life against Death*.
[185] Doody, "Swift among the Women"; Rabb, "Remembering in Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room.'"
[186] Brown, *Fables of Modernity*; Weise, "Seeing and the Difference It Makes"; Nussbaum, "Juvenal, Swift, and The Folly of Love"; Chico, "Privacy and Speculation in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain."

> subject (self-differentiating, self-representing, and therefore narcissistic). The 'abject' is the most fragile, most archaic, sublimation of an 'object' at the point where it is still inseparable from instinctual drives; that is, the mother.[187]

In this part, Jacobus emphasizes the psychological valences of abjection in this definition, as a pre-oedipal state of pre-differentiation from the mother. Yet Kristeva's emphasis on how abjection is also a linguistic phenomenon emerges in her phrasing of the "emergence of the signifying subject" and "sublimation of an 'object'." Not yet a subject, not fully an object, the abject describes a kind of rhetoric where, as Cynthia Chase argues, Kristeva makes conspicuous and challenges a structuralist "system of preexistent positions in which gendered subjects find their assigned place."[188] On the contrary, as Kristeva explains, "abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing its hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it – on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger."[189] Rather than settling comfortably into either subject or object, the abject hovers in a liminal space between the two.

Most salient for our purposes here, Kristeva also describes the abject as urine, blood, sperm, and excrement, which "show up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its 'own and clean self.'"[190] This category of excrescences offers a reassurance that a boundary does exist between self and not-self in how they transgress that boundary. When it voids these polluting substances, the body seems to contain the possibility of becoming clean and only itself, finally separated from those contaminating agents, even faced in the knowledge that they originated from the body. Thus, in "The Lady's Dressing Room," Strephon becomes abject in the face of

[187] Jacobus, "Madonna," 43.
[188] Chase, "Desire and Identification in Lacan and Kristeva," 77.
[189] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 9.
[190] Kristeva, 53.

Celia's effluence. While Swift cannot be excused from the charge of misogyny, there are still important implications for the problem of reading waste not only in spite of but also because of the way Swift portrays waste as a female figure. As Strephon's kind of close reading shows, trying to find meaning in a wasteland of effluence turns the most fastidious reader mad – or bad. Similarly, Swift exploits and transgresses the boundary between the author and his narrator, as well as between the narrator and his protagonist in order to portray excrement satirically and also aesthetically.[191] Within the poem, however, Strephon's horror and disgust mean that he is still not able to aestheticize Celia's effluvia but rather he abjectly obliterates the distance between the male subject and the feminine object. He becomes infected by that which he interrogates as is cannot confirm that he is fully differentiated from it. Additionally**,** neither Swift nor his narrator escape unbesmirched by their aestheticization of Celia's excrement, signaling that aesthetic distancing might be the most desirable stance for close reading.

Strephon initially interprets Celia piece by piece, as a synecdoche; she is alternately "smock," "arm-pits," "dandriff," and "teeth and gums," to name a few. The parts come together into a version of Frankenstein's monster, an unattractive collage of unrelated body parts. But Frankenstein was also a creator, even if his creation was unlovely. Likewise, Strephon – or perhaps it is more accurate to say the narrator of the poem – has a painterly eye that turns his

[191] Brown, *Life against Death*; Smith, *Between Two Stools*; Karian, "Swift as a Manuscript Poet"; Elliott, *The Literary Persona*. The distance between Swift and his narrators and protagonists has been a constant subject of critical debate. Unlike those before him, Norman Brown in "The Excremental Vision" carefully separated the points of view of Swift's satirical personae and the unknowable opinions of Swift the man. Yet still since then, but perhaps unsurprisingly since Freudian analysis began the conversation, much of the scholarly attention paid to this topic in Swift has focused on how this fecal fascination reflects back on Swift the man and author. As Peter Smith notes, "As recently as 2006, Derek Mahon is lazily dismissive of Swift's scatology, identifying it as anomalous and attributing its composition to bereavement." But there also is evidence that Swift had little attachment to his shiterature. As Stephen Karian argues, Swift demonstrates ambivalence about these excremental poems because they remain mostly unpublished in his lifetime: thus we might likewise infer distance between author and persona. Perhaps the most sensible final word on the subject comes from Robert Elliott, who rightly maintains that "[t]he concept of the persona, requiring a distinction between poetic and the empirical 'I,' will not guarantee correct reading of vexed passages in Swift and similar writers, but it does offer stout resistance to fatally easy identifications."

disgust into fascination, and ultimately, aestheticization. In her book, *Making Waste*, Sophie Gee posits that Strephon's compulsive hunt for excrement in the lover's room demonstrates how, for Swift, desire is the other side of the metaphorical coin from disgust.[192] Gee also notes an artistic sensibility to Strephon's keen sense of detail among the general waste, such as in his observations of her dressing table tools:

> A paste of Composition rare,
> Sweat, Dandriff, Powder, Lead and Hair;
> A Forehead Cloth with Oyl upon't
> To smooth the Wrinkles on her Front;
> Here Allum Flower to stop the Steams,
> Exhal'd from sour unsavoury Streams, (l. 23-28)

Swift's language revels in gross particulars that form the "Composition rare" of Celia. His descriptions are painterly, not only from the word choice "composition" but also in his terminology of "Cloth with "Oyl upon't", which recalls oil paintings. The paste of "Sweat, Dandriff, Powder, Lead and Hair" sounds like a poor man's (or poor woman's) substitute concoction for oil paints and brushes, and it also satirizes Belinda's idealized toilette in Pope's mock-heroic masterpiece, "The Rape of the Lock": "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux". "Allum Flower", or powdered alum used as an antiperspirant) is just one letter away from being allium flowers, which are otherworldly purple spherical heads constituted of tiny buds. Alliums are beautiful, alien, and, despite being related to the same vegetable family as onions and garlic, ornamental. Here, though, the "flower" which would now be spelled "flour" (although at the time, the spellings were often conflated), is decidedly not ornamental, but rather,

[192] Gee, *Making Waste*, 108.

evidence of Celia's sweaty, stinky body. As Strephon investigates his lover's dressing room, he recognizes the dirt alongside the products that made Celia presentable outside of her dressing room. His prior attraction to the fully put-together Celia morphs with his new knowledge, as he becomes overly attentive to the pieces of herself and her toilette she left behind. He is attracted at the same time he is repulsed.

Strephon's interest seems to spring from his morbid fascination, which goes hand in hand with painterly eye that does not allow a single detail to escape.[193] Kenner describes *connoisseurship* as prizing an object only after "some former pocket of time" when "they were purposeful," and Strephon in this passage seems to subordinate the useful items of Celia's toilette in an attempt to aestheticize.[194] This is seen in details of Strephon's observations of the all-too-practical implements on Celia's dressing table, such as how the "alum flower" brings to mind the ornamental plant, temporarily subordinating its usefulness. Instead of focusing on his attraction to the classical norms of Celia's feminine beauty, Strephon gives himself over to the study of gross particulars, individualizing his connoisseurship both in how he dwells on Celia's specificity but also in how he gives himself over to his own, individual obsession. Strephon, then, represents the aesthetic avant-garde of his time, which means that his keen observation of Celia's excrement is actually a moment of aesthetic training.

Yet Strephon does not maintain an aesthetic distance, despite his connoisseurship and painterly eye cast towards Celia's mess. In fact, the poem suggests that much of what he sees might actually be himself – or of his own making. The poem provides ample evidence that some

[193] Strephon's painterly eye especially resembles William Hogarth's satirical paintings from the same era, which similarly omit no unsavory detail. See, for instance, *A Rake's Progress, A Harlot's Progress*, *Beer Street*, and *Gin Lane*. Thanks to Dr. David S. Black for making this apt comparison.
[194] Kenner, *The Counterfeiters*, 12.

of Strephon's descriptions might originate in his imagination, or even in observing himself, rather than the actual detritus on display. The first signal of this directly follows Strephon's initial "inventory" that he puts in such painterly terms, when finally the filthy towels elicit a visceral reaction from him: "But oh! it turned poor *Strephon*'s Bowels, / When he beheld and smelt the Towels" (l. 43- 44). His turning bowels indicate a number of things, first and most obvious his revulsion – we would now say that something turns our stomach rather than our bowels. A second interpretation rests on how that the bowels were understood to be the seat of the emotions at the time, such that the line now suggests that his feelings toward Celia – and perhaps in general – are being upended. But also, finally, the line describes a movement of the bowels that might give a suspicious reader reason to believe that Strephon had personal reasons for frantically seeking Celia's chamber pot, in response to his turning bowels.

Strephon's increasing identification with what he sees in Celia's dressing room crescendos when he looks into a mirror:

> When frighted *Strephon* cast his Eye on't
> It shewed the Visage of a Gyant.
> A Glass that can to Sight disclose,
> The smallest Worm in *Celia's* Nose,
> And faithfully direct her Nail
> To squeeze it out from Head to tail;
> (For catch it nicely by the Head,
> It must come out alive or dead.) (l. 61 – 68)

This passage moves seamlessly – and thereby deceptively – from the action of Strephon discovering his "Gyant" face to the hypothetical uses of that mirror, that "*can* to Sight disclose."

Here, after confronting Celia's bodily effluvia, Strephon becomes abject, no longer able to fully distinguish himself from her detritus. There is an imaginative transference between Strephon looking into the glass and recognizing Celia within it. As Wendy Weise shrewdly notices, "[f]or the reader, the representation of woman as signifier of difference collapses completely once one realizes that there is no female subject in the poem."[195] Instead, Strephon, in his abjection, both is and is not the horror that he sees, encapsulated in the shift of perspective in this section. When Strephon casts his eye on the glass, the "Visage of a Gyant" can only be his own. Yet the hypothetical "can" of the next line transforms his face into Celia's. Along with bodily effluence, Kristeva says that corpses are also abject, which might explain the implication of decaying flesh in the description of it being a worm, rather than a pimple, in Celia's hypothetical nose. The very detailed description of what is probably simply the action of squeezing out the pus from a pimple can only either be Strephon's imagination or himself – no one else is in the room.

As I hinted at the beginning of this reading, it might be more accurate to point to the poem's narrator as the character with the aesthetic impulse; a key to understanding this poem is in the distance it creates between the narrator and Strephon. Strephon is a man possessed by the object of his infatuation, Celia. His horror towards her effluence emerges in proportion to his original desire; his bowels, and emotions, are moved. The narrator, on the other hand, takes a tone of bemused detachment. His interest in Strephon and the hunt for evidence of Celia is peppered with wry commentary, often at odds with Strephon, whom he first describes as "*Strephon*, the Rogue" (l. 13). In the original inventory of Celia's dressing table, there's ambiguity about who speaks the lines that create the painterly tone. Strephon "produces" The various Combs for various Uses," (l. 20) but the description that follows could be either from

[195] Weise, "Seeing and the Difference It Makes," 716.

him or the narrator. Perhaps the best indication comes straight after the episode with the monstrous magnifying mirror when the narrator says, "Why *Strephon* will you tell the rest? / And must you needs describe the Chest?" (l. 69-70). "Will you tell the rest" implies the commentary until that point has come from the narrator, and indeed even afterwards the narrator takes the narrative reins again, addressing Strephon as "you" barely four lines later, in which time no discernable shift in narrative perspective, style, or voice has taken place. Louise Barnett feels there is enough evidence to claim that "the narrator is the exemplar close reader, not Strephon."[196] However, I feel that while the poem is clear that the narrator speaks the whole, it remains ultimately ambiguous about whose observations the poem represents because the lines could equally be taken as the narrator's exasperation at Strephon's impropriety in laying bare Celia's private matter. Bogel describes this unknowable relationship between the narrator and Strephon as "disclaimed agency," a phrase that could apply equally to how Strephon moves like a man possessed, and how the narrator pretends not to have any influence over Strephon.[197]

In the end, our inability to fully distinguish the narrator's comments from Strephon's brings us back to the centrality of Strephon's initial aesthetic stance towards Celia's effluence. The narrator's role in filtering and perhaps elaborating on Strephon's comments, the description of Celia's comb and the other contents of her dressing table being but one example, shows how aestheticization might also be an impulse to distance the observer from an object that creates discomfort in the viewer in a bid to turn it into pleasure instead. However, Strephon cannot sustain his detached point of view because the effluence is more than mere material. His initial aesthetic stance gives way to disgust, which, interestingly, instead of repelling him, draws him in

[196] Barnett, "The Mysterious Narrator: Another Look at 'The Lady's Dressing Room,'" 30.
[197] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 116.

even more. For Strephon, reading bodily waste triggers abjection just as Kristeva predicts. Any aesthetic distance Strephon originally had collapses as he can no longer seem to distinguish between his own face in the mirror and Celia's – and this is the reason for his horror.

Strephon's abject horror, and the poem's hilarity, climaxes in his infamous exclamation, "*Celia*, *Celia*, *Celia*, shits!" Read with a Kristevan lens of abjection, this recognition is of his own body's decay and waste – merely transfer Celia's name for Strephon's and the truth still holds. In Kristeva, the appearance of excrement would seem to confirm that Strephon struggles to maintain a boundary between himself and Celia. Just like urine, blood, and semen, excrement separates from the body, and in so doing provides the possibility of a clean break from the contamination at the same time as it results from and forms that body. By focusing on the feces, Strephon seems to lose his assurance about which body originally produced it. A Kristevan reading might identify this moment as when:

> The body's inside, in that case, shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside. It is as if the skin, a fragile container, no longer guaranteed the integrity of one's 'own and clean self' but, scraped or transparent, invisible or taut, gave way before the dejection of its contents.[198]

The skin resembles Strephon's mirror at its point of disappearance, that is to say, when Strephon loses sight of the boundaries that demarcate the mirror and sees Celia take his plate. The skin is "transparent," "invisible," with a smooth, hard surface that comes from being "scraped" and "taut." Both Strephon and his mirror give way before the dejection of his focus, and the excrement usually hidden inside is exposed.

[198] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 53.

However, a unilaterally Kristevan reading of this poem risks overemphasizing how Strephon seems to take on Celia's excremental identity in his abject reading. In this moment the correspondence between Strephon and the excrement he discovers resembles Freud's uncanny as well. While the two terms are easily conflated, Kristeva describes abjection as "[e]ssentially different from 'uncanniness,' more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin."[199] Freud relied on the explanatory power of the Oedipal dynamic: the male subject desiring his mother and fearing castration by the father. The dynamic Kristeva discovers, however, is pre-oedipal, where instead of a desire *for* the mother, the male subject wants to *be* the mother. This desire to *be* is the failure to recognize kinship – kinship describing a relationship between two separate beings. On the other hand, the uncanny can be understood as recognizing kinship where none was expected. As Freud explains, the "uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed."[200] The uncanny gains its power from being foreign at the same time as it is familiar. Freud goes on to observe, "It often happens that neurotic men state that to them there is something uncanny about the female genitals. But what they find uncanny ['unhomely'] is actually the entrance to man's old 'home', the place where everyone once lived."[201] Here we find a psychological explanation for the figuration of excrement as female – especially loose and lascivious females like the copulating Cloacina in *The Dunciad*. Or in Swift's poem, how it is the evidence of his mistress's only too-human body that sparks the uncanny reaction for Strephon.

[199] Kristeva, 5.
[200] Freud, McLintock, and Haughton, *The Uncanny*, 148.
[201] Freud, McLintock, and Haughton, 151.

Yet neither his abject nor his uncanny reactions erase his consistent stance in the poem as Celia's lover.

Thus finishing his grand Survey,

Disgusted *Strephon* stole away

Repeating in his amorous Fits,

Oh! *Celia, Celia, Celia* shits! (l. 115 – 118)

That Strephon can be disgusted yet still amorous is a curious situation, not easily explained by Kristeva or Freud, nor indeed aesthetic theory. This is compounded by how the lines can be read in a couple of ways. Either Strephon has become completely unhinged and shouts nonstop that he simultaneously desires and damns Celia's materiality, or he is attempting to talk himself out of his desire by repeating the horror of his vision – that Celia shits. The former interpretation is more Kristevan – his amorousness remains because Celia's body works just like his. The latter interpretation resists any equation between Strephon and Celia's bodies, however. Its implied surprise at the fact that Celia excretes links it more to the uncanny, where Strephon cannot recognize the correspondence between them and their bodies. In either scenario, one thing is certain: Strephon has been forever altered by his close reading of waste matter. Vengeance personified punishes him for "Peeping" by giving him a "foul Imagination" that in a Lockean association of ideas forever couples the image of any woman with the stench of excrement. Notably though, this association does not completely overpower Strephon as an interpreter not only because he remains amorous but also because the word "Fits" suggests that his response remains creative since "fit" can mean a "part or section of a poem or song" (*OED*).

Strephon's curse to be unable to distinguish anything except the excremental *and* being unable to reinterpret Celia's excrement as an universal marker of humanity such that he can

move past his horror. It is a kind of tunnel vision resulting from how he has failed to integrate his new understanding of Celia's material body with his own self-knowledge – namely that he and everyone else must shit. He is stuck in an abject state, no longer able to separate his body from another's. Kristeva's notion of abjection recalls Bogel's observation, in his own close reading of this poem, on the dual derivation of the word excrement – how it is both part of and separate from the body that produced it.[202] Strephon's horror encapsulates the impossibility of differentiating ourselves from our excrescence. The more he tries to divide the object of his horror into a multitude of synecdochic references, the more it reflects the fractured state of his own mind as it comes face to face with the reality that his lover fails to live up to his idealized and disembodied visions of love. Strephon's rhetorical skills and painterly eye can only distract from, and perhaps slightly reframe, the essential narrative of the scene. Celia's excrement and Strephon's compulsion to seek it proves that their romance and their bodies are inextricable from the waste they produce; the body that shits and the body that loves are the same.

And the female body is particularly potent for the kind of confused non-recognition described in the often-violent boundary-crossing of Kristeva's abjection because a man, like any human body, can be thought of as both part of and separate from the female body that produced it. There is a strong relationship (and perhaps a telling ambiguity) between excrement and procreation, in which we find the effect of the abject. Freud's definition of the uncanny begins to explain the misogynistic undertones of how Swift consistently figures waste and excrement as female. Freud points to feelings of "estrangement" in his male subjects as they recognize that they are both born of but entirely separate from their mothers. Kristeva suggests an even starker moment of somehow reassuring recognition that excrement is a category on par with the "self" –

[202] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 115.

which also jibes with her description of the feminine, which "far from being a primeval essence, will be seen as an 'other' without a name."[203] For Strephon, this is the moment that he realizes that Celia has bowel movements, just as he does.

This recognition is epitomized in the famously unattributable phrase, "inter faeces et urinam nascimur," which is as much a physiological fact as a truism about the human condition. Rabelais depicts a boisterous version of the connection between self and feminine waste in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, where Gargantua is born after his mother eats a feast of tripe (a delicacy of intestine matter). The midwives at first confuse Gargamelle's feces for the baby, picking through it, seemingly in the belief that the baby might be indistinguishable from her feces. When a midwife decides to block Gargamelle's sphincter, the baby instead travels up in her body, being delivered out of her left ear.[204] Rabelais mashes together images of Hera's birth from Zeus's head, with (Rabelais insists at the beginning of the chapter) the nativity scene, with a fecund, scatological view of essential human nature. This confusing, disturbing, but also hilarious correspondence between feces, child, and the mother that produced them replicates both the link between Freud's theory of the uncanny and Swift's feminization of excrement.

Notably, the narrator in Swift's poem shows that he already has understood and accepted this correspondence when he proffers some unsolicited advice to Strephon: "Should I the Queen of Love refuse, / Because she rose from stinking Ooze?" (l. 131-132). The lines conjure up a perverted vision of Botticelli's painting, the *Birth of Venus* (finished in 1485), but in which the queen of love resembles Venus less than the goddess "Dulness" who oversees the "sheer fecal fun"[205] in Pope's *The Dunciad*, which incidentally was being written and re-written around the

[203] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 58.
[204] Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 225–26.
[205] I take this infectious phrase from Bogel, "Dulness Unbound," 844.

same time as "The Lady's Dressing Room." She rises (although Swift suggestively uses the past tense, which conflates her action with the flower) to become distinguishable from the "Ooze." But while the narrator claims that Celia "in her Glory" contrasts with the wasteland that she both created and emerged from, a fact to which Strephon is "blind," he also recommends that Strephon "but stop his Nose" in order to appreciate the difference between Celia and her effluence. That is, Celia ultimately remains indistinguishable by smell from her excrement (l. 129, 136). The narrator's boisterousness at Strephon's expense recalls the scatological revelry in Rabelais as well. It also appears to confirm Kristeva's observation that "laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection" because the narrator displays none of the abjectness of Strephon when confronted with the same effluvia.[206]

The narrator, as opposed to Strephon, is able to laugh at abject materials and also recognize the fertile consequences of feminine excrement. *He* would not refuse an excremental queen of love. Searching for an embodied explanation of this relationship between excrement and feminine generative power, I asked two doctors whether there are connections between the digestive and procreative systems. One replied that the proximity of the vagina and anus is, to some degree, physically important. The area between the vagina and anus is called the perineum. It is vascular and able to heal well from any tears: an apt embodiment of the boundary between excrement and procreation which is also quite flexible.[207] Childbirth often is accompanied by fecal incontinence. However, as another pointed out, unlike with fecal transplants, which help to recolonize chronically ill adults' microbiomes, infants' immune systems are best strengthened via exposure to their mothers' vaginal canals rather than their feces, which sometimes exposes

[206] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 8.
[207] Interview with Dr. David Mann, Temple University School of Medicine, 11 August 2013.

the infant to the danger of sepsis.[208] Thus, the bacterial colony of the mother's birth canal provides her infant with an ideal population of colonic bacteria, but the bacteria from her feces could endanger that same infant's life. The separation between a woman's birthing and excretory tracts remains physically tenuous even as it is important for the health of the child to enforce that division.

A mother thus strengthens her children's ability to process nutrients and waste and provides the original biological basis to distinguish between harmful and beneficial bacteria, even as her body simultaneously contains both harmful as well as beneficial potential. This explanation, even if it is extrapolated from twenty-first century medicine, has particular potency for eighteenth-century literature. Separated from Rabelais's joyful and boisterous scatology by a couple centuries and the English Channel, now-canonical writers including Dryden, Pope, Fielding, Sterne – and Swift especially – were concerned with the ability to distinguish good from bad, literature from hack writing, and nourishment from all kinds of excrement. Thus, the power of the female body is to represent an uncanny correspondence between what these writers hoped would be dichotomies. Excrement takes on particular significance in these writers as a metaphor often used to depict an inability to distinguish between unlike things. Once the correspondence is recognized as abject, it explains why the indistinguishability between excrement and nearly anything else is so often figured as female, and why excremental texts are so often bound up with discussions about the act of writing and interpreting. This chapter's recognition of this essential feminine element to Swift's scatology is not meant to be totalizing but rather is an attempt to rebalance overly masculine readings. Saccamano notes "a paternal model of literary meaning" in Swift in moments like "The Words of such Writers being like

[208] Interview with Dr. Margaret J. Black, Family Medicine Obstetrics, Providence Medical Group, 6 August 2018.

Seed," where the "author-father inseminates the mother-text which, with the mediation of the midwife-commentator, gives birth to meaning."[209] In this model the masculine author is given agency where the female figure is hopefully receptive and fecund receptacle for ideas that only come into being with the commentator's help. This is similar to Fielding's paternal model for his authorship of *Tom Jones*, his female figure being his muse, who provides a womb for his novel:

> But the Author whose Muse hath brought forth, will feel the pathetic Strain … while I mention the Uneasiness with which the big Muse bears about her burden, the painful Labour with which she produces it, and lastly, the Care, the Fondness, with which the tender Father nourishes his Favourite, till it be brought to maturity, and produced into the world.[210]

I would note that it takes both the male and female figures (or three, if you count the midwife) to get it right in both Swift and Fielding's paternal models. However, as these poets decry a general inability in the early eighteenth century to distinguish, they seem to be voicing anxiety that they are being left without a receptive, fecund female text and commentator as well as deserting her biologically-determined role in providing a first lesson in differentiation.

CLOSE READING AN UNLOVELY OBJECT

In Strephon's reaction to Celia's effluence, as opposed to the distance the narrator affects, he dares to get close to the object of his scrutiny. Strephon's actions are not only a form of close

[209] Saccamano, "Knowledge, Power, Allegory: Swift's Tale and Neoclassical Literary Criticism," 304. "The Words of such Writers being like Seed" comes from the tenth section of *A Tale of a Tub* (Swift, *The Writings of Jonathan Swift; Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Criticism*, 358.)
[210] Fielding, Keymer, and Wakely, *The History of Tom Jones*, XI.i.500.

reading, as I've argued, but also resemble Bogel's description of the type of hyperattentiveness so often conflated with so-called "overreading" on one hand, and romantic infatuation on the other. In his book describing and defending "New Formalist" criticism, that is to say the practice of sustained close reading, he ultimately concludes by rehabilitating that type of hyperattentiveness usually associated with romantic infatuation, which might be understood as "overreading" in literary criticism. With apologies in advance for equating the nuances of Bogel's argument with Strephon's compulsive "overreading" of Celia, comparing the two sheds light on both the possible benefits and the limits of Strephon's attention to Celia's effluence.

Strephon's original impulse to investigate Celia's dressing room jibes with Bogel's description of the kind of necessary readerly impulse necessary to truly understand a text. In a chapter titled "Textual Infatuation, True Infatuation," he investigates how the analysis of texts resembles "our affective, passional, and romantic experience – in particular, the ways we know the persons we admire, love, and desire." As he describes his argument,

> This attempt rests on the assumptions that in order to know a literary text intimately and profoundly, one must risk a sustained raptness of attention that transgresses the boundaries of moderation and seemliness, and that such attention finds a non-textual parallel in the immoderate scrutiny and heedfulness that characterize the phenomenon of romantic infatuation.[211]

There is nothing seemly or moderate about Strephon's attention to Celia. The poem opens with a suggestion that Strephon has been waiting for a chance to sneak into Celia's room. Even before the poem's narrative beginning, someone has counted "Five Hours, (and who can do it less in?) / By haughty Celia spent in Dressing" (l. 1-2) and the most likely culprit is the person who has

[211] Bogel, *New Formalist Criticism*, 11.

been waiting and watching for an opportunity: "*Strephon*, who found the Room was void, / And *Betty* otherwise employ'd; / Stole in…" (l. 5-7). Infatuated, Strephon seems willing to wait at length, perhaps even for five hours (although the person counting those hours remains unclear) just for the chance to glance his mistress's inner sanctum: surely this constitutes sustained "raptness of attention." But it is also transgressive on multiple counts. Strephon "steals" into a room in which he otherwise would not be allowed, and he continues to transgress by thoroughly investigating all of Celia's objects and effluence. Intense scrutiny and heedfulness: check.

Strephon's close reading of Celia also follows the contours of the second part of Bogel's defense of close reading, which questions the "traditional allegiance to the concepts of wholeness and unity in literary criticism."[212] This part of Bogel's argument also ties into the ideas of discovery and surprise – "surprise not as an affective experience, but as a methodological, epistemic, and hermeneutic possibility arising from investigation of specifically formal features of a text."[213] Strephon's anguished cry of surprise that "Celia, Celia, Celia shits!" shows that he has followed this advice. The problem with Strephon's reading of Celia likewise coincides with a

> New Formalist fetishizing of parts – of textual elements – to a point at which the whole they constitute recedes almost to vanishing, or is bracketed almost to the point of annihilation. Such an effort does not represent an ultimate denigration of textual or other artistic wholes; instead, it enables a realization of individual elements that would otherwise be impossible – a realization that can redeem both the charge of critical overreading and that of romantic infatuation."[214]

[212] Bogel, 12.
[213] Bogel, 14.
[214] Bogel, 12.

And here is the nub of the problem. Strephon's fetishizing, what I called aestheticizing, of Celia's disjointed elements of effluence leads to a misogynistic conclusion of horror about her body being capable of producing waste. The misogyny lies largely in his piecemeal dissection of the evidence of her body combined with his strong reaction towards it. It reveals that Celia isn't allowed any normal bodily functions even though it shouldn't have been a shock to Strephon that her body produces effluence, the same as his. It is a misogyny confirmed by contemporaneous readers such as Mary Wortley Montagu and modern critics such as Laura Brown alike.

Strephon's troubled close reading of Celia, even though it adheres fairly closely to the standards of New Formalist criticism, suggests that there might be a fundamental problem with the act of close reading. Namely, close reading might not always already be ethically or morally laudable, particularly when the wholeness of the read object is denied. This is a possibility that deserves consideration. But Bogel's description of the New Formalist fetishizing of parts points to where Strephon's reading fails. Even though he exhibits intense scrutiny of individual elements, allowing himself to be surprised by what he finds, Strephon's close reading stumbles when his "realization of individual elements" leads to a "*denigration*" of the whole. His reading's initial motivation of infatuation has been lost, and he does not have enough genuine feeling or compassion to replace it. Even the narrator's more positive spin fails to recontextualize Celia's parts into a more nuanced whole:

> If *Strephon* would but stop his Nose;
> (Who now so impiously blasphemes
> Her Ointments, Daubs, and Paints and Creams,
> Her Washes, Slops, and every Clout
> With which he makes so foul a rout;)

He soon would learn to think like me

And bless his ravisht Sight to see

Such Order from Confusion sprung,

Such gaudy Tulips rais'd from Dung. (l. 136 – 144)

His parting observation on Celia only compares her to "gaudy Tulips," falling back on a tired trope comparing women to flowers. The narrator reveals that, for all his witty commentary, he has gained nothing by examining Celia's effluence alongside Strephon. His opinion has remained unchanged, even if he pretends that his sense of decorum has been shocked. For the narrator, it might come down to how he refuses to be surprised by any of the revelations about Celia's grime – notice his impatient tone in this section with Strephon for discovering the ordinariness of Celia's body. The narrator ultimately does not have enough interest in the specificity of Celia and her particular effluence.

In raising these critiques of the kind of close reading exemplified by the characters of Strephon and the narrator in this poem, I do not wish to suggest that all close readings need to hew to a certain set of political principles, nor that all literature needs to be absolved from offending certain segments of the population. I am not even critiquing Swift for writing a misogynistic poem – I think it is important to separate the inaccessible author from the thoroughly accessible text, a text which is all the greater for demonstrating the subtleties of these two characters' relative close readings. Instead, I want to suggest a slender addition to Bogel's formulation of the kind of good close reading that resembles infatuation based on how these two characters fail Celia in their own readings. In short: in order for a reading to be any good (a word I choose for both its moral and aesthetic connotations), a fundamental feeling of care, concern,

and yes, even appetite à la Fielding must exist first for the read object. Fleeting infatuation is not enough to support sustained close reading.

WHAT ABOUT THE WOMEN?

Lady Mary Montagu and her poem, "The Reasons that Induced Dr. S.[wift] to write a Poem called 'The Lady's Dressing Room'," enter this chapter as the final test case of how to interpret that which inspires disgust.[215] As the glamorous wife to the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, she became famous writing letters chronicling her travel to and life in Constantinople, particularly since she could testify to the lives of women in a highly segregated society. She also introduced the smallpox vaccination to Britain on her return. She socialized in literary circles and was a friend of Alexander Pope for a time – he was reputed to love her – although their relationship later became acrimonious. Pope proceeded to skewer her in a few of his writings, which may have been part of the reason why she was ready to pounce on Swift (notice, too, that she sticks in a jab at Pope in lines 45-6: Poor Pope Philosophy displays on / With so much Rhime and little reason").[216] By the time Swift wrote "The Lady's Dressing Room," an older Montagu no longer enjoyed these former social and literary statuses and instead was becoming infamous for her slovenliness. She took particular umbrage with this poem, perhaps suspecting that she was a model for Celia's gross particulars. Thus, this poem responds to Swift in kind. In all of the previous examples, we have had to rely on the examples of characters and narrators in Swift's work for models of reading that which elicits disgust – and

[215] The text for Montagu's poem can be found in Montagu, *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, 273–76.
[216] For a wonderful biography of Montagu's life and literature see Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.*

extrapolate strategies. Montagu's poem is valuable, on the other hand, as a case study of a contemporary literary figure's almost real-time response after interpreting a text for which she has no appetite.

Montagu's critical response seems motivated primarily not by infatuation, care, or concern – separating it from the motivations Bogel has established so far for good close readings – but a retaliation for a perceived personal attack. Perhaps, though, we could file retaliation on a personal attack under "self care or love"? Her interpretation of the thing that elicits her disgust, in this case Swift's alleged misogyny and possible personal attack, is similar to Strephon's initial response to his disgust at Celia's effluence in that she also lets it be a moment of aesthetic creation, but more literally: she writes a poem. This suggests that the best defense against that which threatens our aesthetic and moral ideals is to create more art that interrogates the imbalance between disgusting and desirable – as opposed to Strephon's solution of merely running away from the object that he finds simultaneously desirable and disgusting.

Montagu's poem aims to correct that imbalance by writing an alternative history to Swift's. It re-envisions the scenario in Celia's dressing room and interprets Swift's poem as revenge, which in turn recasts Montagu's revenge poem into an impartial historical corrective – she sets us straight. Like Weise, I also see that "Montagu burlesques Swift's poetics carefully, indicating that she both perceived and attempted to raze his conflation of the material with the specular as gendered mechanisms of power."[217] One might rephrase Weise to say that Montagu turns the mirror of the excremental object and satire back on Swift – and she does so by shifting the poem's perspective to a version of Celia, giving her the powerful final word.

I'll be reveng'd, you saucy Quean

[217] Weise, "Seeing and the Difference It Makes," 709.

(Replys the disappointed Dean)

I'll so describe your dressing room

The very Irish shall not come.

She answer'd short, I'm glad you'll write,

You'l furnish paper when I shite. (l. 84 – 89)

In these final lines Montagu reveals the immediate pre-history to "The Lady's Dressing Room" – Swift, disappointed that his visit to a prostitute (and money – Swift was notoriously spendthrift) was wasted because he proves impotent, threatens to slander the prostitute and make her unappealing to customers – uncleanliness not only being unappealing in itself, but also a euphemism for venereal disease. With the prostitute's response that she cares no more for Swift's poem than she does toilet paper, reducing his writing to the material the same way that his poem reduces Celia to forms of matter, both cosmetic and bodily.[218] Yet again, we find an object that is meant to clean but that becomes dirty when used. Notice too, that Montagu's poem, ostensibly meant to clarify and defend against Swift's, performs much the same function by dredging up a lurid backstory, and slinging mud back at him with some alacrity. Weise claims that in so doing, Betty is "wielding the tools of abjection herself."[219] Montagu's poem threatens to turn Swift's into toilet paper, thus insisting on the materiality of the text. That is, her poem threatens to undo the aesthetic defense that allows language to transcend the conditions in which it has been produced: a poem that is no longer a piece of art is just a sheet of paper that might be useful in other ways. However, tension remains between the two texts. In order for Swift's poem

[218] Thanks to Professor Fredric Bogel for suggesting this apt comparison.
[219] Weise, "Seeing and the Difference It Makes," 722.

to become the lowest piece of trash, Montagu's must be taken seriously: a poem, simply by existing, threatens to obliterate another.[220]

While denigrating another poem's status as an art object, Montagu's insists on its own status through a poetic structure that is even more ostentatious than Swift's, thanks to the chiming end rhymes of the iambic tetrameter couplets. This rhythm is a little more curt than iambic pentameter, which is said to best mimic spoken English, and thus suits the poem's curt dialogue well. Yet the storyline to the poem is so dominant – the poem proclaims in its title that its purpose is to tell the story of the Dean's reasons for writing "The Lady's Dressing Room" – that it is hard to take a step back from the narrative and pay attention to the language itself. The close reading in the paragraph above, in fact, falls into that trap by analyzing the content without touching on the particulars of the language. But if we do linger with the language a bit longer, we can notice first the rhyme forcing an equation between "Quean" – the prostitute Betty – and the "Dean." Elsewhere, Swift is "The Reverend Lover," "the Doctor," and "the Priest" – each respectable epithet only making the distance between his titles of honor and his dishonorable behavior clearer, until the only difference between the Dean and the Quean seems to be that the latter can still offer the former something he wants. The Dean's authority and desirability, on the other hand, are like his virility: dried up. Montagu has the Swift character likewise lampoon himself in the line, "the very Irish shall not come" (Swift was Irish but had mixed feelings about the place), but also, and not least of all, for the pun on the word "come."[221]

---

[220] This relationship between the Swift and Montagu's poem resembles Bogel's observation, during a reading of Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, that a piece of literature, "far from being 'harmonizable' with other works and their singularities, actually wish to seize all the territory, invalidate every other work, and thereby also undo the very idea of comparability." However, Montagu's poem threatens to obliterate only Swift's. (Bogel, *New Formalist Criticism*, 173.) Adorno's original observation claims that works of art "refuse to be compared" and "want to annihilate each other, …each the mortal enemy of each." (Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 75., as quoted by Bogel).

[221] The *OED* provides evidence that the verb form of "come" was slang for experiencing a sexual orgasm since at least 1604.

Montagu's poem intentionally mimics Swift's in multiple ways, all the better to set itself up as the "real" interpretation of Strephon's fecal fascination. We see this not only in the meter (although Swift's meter varies and is not iambic tetrameter exclusively), setting in a dressing room, and the long wait the male protagonist must undergo before being admitted to the woman's room, but also in the parallels in how the two poems treat excrement. In both it is – quite literally – the final word: "shite" in Montagu's and "dung" in Swift's. The "shite" in Montagu's poem echoes the line "Oh, Celia, Celia, Celia shits!" – and the poem's drama hinges on these lines too. Interestingly, in both poems the feces comes from the woman – Strephon discovers Celia's in a disguised chamber pot but Betty offers her own to the Swift character (albeit as a future hypothetical – "you'l furnish paper when I shite"). While there's a vastly different tone in how each woman owns their excrement, with Betty boldly weaponizing hers to bring the male protagonist down a peg, in both poems it still functions to end all interpretation abruptly. In Swift's poem, after Strephon has seen Celia's shit, he begins to see her – and every other woman – as nothing more than the waste she produces. That is, his interpretation of the woman in front of him now begins and ends with her excrement. In Montagu's poem, on the other hand, Betty's excrement obliterates the Swift character's written words. Not only does she refuse to read his poem, but she ensures no one else might either.

While excrement ultimately has the same effect in both poems – ending interpretation once and for all – Montagu suggests that the way Betty ends any reading of the Swift character's poem still contains a seed of redemption. That is, if she ends the poem by wiping her own bum with it (as she threatens), or Montagu writes a rebuttal (which happens in fact) both Betty the character and Montagu the author claim power over the reception of Swift's poem. Montagu celebrates the power of the interpreter, not least of all by creating another text that may be

interpreted. By giving Betty and her excrement the last word, Montagu begins to reclaim the dubious power of the sluttish objects that proliferate in Swift's texts.

I bring out the word "sluttish" not only because Betty is clearly a prostitute and Celia is likely to be as well because of the quantities of makeup in her dressing room (nice girls did not wear much makeup in the eighteenth century, but it was heavily used by those trying to hide the marks of venereal disease), but also as Swift uses the word to describe the maid in his "Meditation on a Broomstick."

> But a *Broom-stick*, perhaps you will say, is an Emblem of a Tree standing on its Head; and pray what is Man but a topsy-turvy Creature? His Animal Faculties perpetually mounted on his Rational; his Head where his Heels should be, groveling on the Earth. And yet, with all his Faults, he sets up to be a universal Reformer and Corrector of Abuses; a Remover of Grievances; rakes into every Slut's Corner of Nature, bringing hidden Corruptions to the Light, and raiseth a mighty Dust where there was none before; sharing deeply all the while in the very same Pollutions he pretends to sweep away. His last Days are spent in Slavery to Women, and generally the least deserving; till worn to the Stumps, like his Brother *Bezom*, he is either kicked out of Doors, or made use of to kindle Flames for others to warm themselves by.[222]

The "slut" in this passage refers back to the previously-mentioned wench, or maid, and suggests that her "Corner of Nature" wants a thorough sweeping. However, this passage clearly also implicates the broom that would pretend to clean up the slut's corner, all of which I already demonstrated in the prior close reading of this essay. Now I also want to draw out how, according to the OED, sluts are a mixture of many things. The word can mean something as

[222] Swift, *The Writings of Jonathan Swift; Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Criticism*, 421–22.

innocuous as a kitchen maid (like the one in Swift's meditation who handles the broomstick), but primarily means someone dirty and slatternly in appearance, or loose in her (especially sexual) morals. One consistency between all these definitions is the female figure who does many things – there is no clarity about what she stands for, and her slatternly existence begrimes her, both literally and morally. This is like what Strephon experiences when he reads Celia's dressing room as evidence of her slatternliness – while we also note that this noun connoting dirtiness phonetically slides and transgresses its definitional boundaries into the word "slut." In transgressing moral boundaries, the slut wields a kind of power too, particularly over the men who seek her out. Likewise, in the "Meditation on a Broomstick," Swift portrays the woman who wields the broom as a sort of tyrant with absolute power of its fate.

Yet this sluttish power remains dubious because, despite its interesting implications for understanding what's disturbing Swift's male characters – ie. both the consistent transgressions of boundaries and the ability to be many things at once (including both a woman and text being close read) – the word also is a powerful shaming tool to keep women in their place (it is so rarely applied to men) even as it acknowledges woman's power to elide boundaries. Notice too that sluttish women resemble objects that in cleaning are themselves begrimed – not only the broomstick but also Celia's comb, basin, and towels, which are metonymic stand-ins for her associated body parts. Thus, the agency of a slut might be questionable when she is being compared to other begrimed objects, but Montagu emphasizes how that female body has agency even while it is being instrumentalized by a male writer in how Betty takes ownership of her own excrement and uses it to threaten those who threaten her.

TO CONCLUDE

Ending with a reading of Montagu's response to Swift helps us resist relying too heavily on an explanation of waste as feminine because it uncannily (or abjectly) reminds the male observer of himself and thereby kindles disgust. By shifting points of views, waste no longer overwhelms the whole, nor indicts only the person who produced it but also the person who reads it. That indictment of the interpreter is the key to the role of excrement in Swift, although the persistent link between the feminine and excrement also suggests an inherent fecundity in how it links a woman's procreative capacity to the fertility that only manure can impart to (mother) earth. It points to a solution for the beleaguered and besmattered reader-critic: to allow an aesthetic stance towards the excremental object to inspire a creative act in return. Yet an aesthetically-minded close reading is far from an easy answer to the problem of how to read potential waste matter or that which elicits disgust.

The excremental object pushes close reading to its limits because it asks the reader to find significance, interest, and value in a satirical and disgusting object. Swift shows that it is also the edge (if not fully submerged) of madness: the projectors of the Academy of Lagado are clearly unhinged; Gulliver, who delighted in chronicling his own bathroom habits, ends the book renouncing all company except horses, whom he imitates; and Strephon, the protagonist in Swift's poem, "The Lady's Dressing Room," is more than a bit odd in his drive to seek out all the excrescences he can find in his lover's room. In Strephon's response to Celia's excrement – and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's response to Swift over this poem – we have both an intratextual and extratextual response to examine for an answer of what might be possible for a reader pushed to her limits by a text or object that would not seem to elicit any appetite. As I have argued, the common strategy of both Strephon's and Montagu's responses is to aestheticize

what could have simply been waste and create a new art object of their own. The excremental object pushes its reader to cross the line from reader to creator, as seen in Strephon's poetic reaction when he aestheticizes Celia's excrescences in his "amorous Fits," as well as Montagu's authoring of a response poem.

Swift's characters show how excrescences spark close reading but also that the text thereby contaminates the reader. Like the meditated-upon broomstick, close reading is "destined to make other Things clean, and be nasty it self."[223] Or, as he describes the "Lanthorns" in "The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit": "which the more Light they bear in their Bodies, cast out so much the more Soot, and Smoak, and fulginous Matter to adhere to the sides."[224] Or, in the formulation from *A Tale of a Tub*, "*They were a Race of Men, who delighted to nibble at the Superfluities, and Excrescencies of Books*."[225] As the word excrescence suggests, it is not always excrement and other bodily decay that sparks this response, but also that which is not integral to the whole, the excessive, and superfluous. These parts seem to trigger one's inner critic, a reaction which Swift repeatedly explores. However, that overly zealous attention to parts, especially when it comes at the expense of understanding the whole, also shows the limits of close reading. The act of reading and interpretation is a process that taints the reader, for better (usually) or worse. Like the lamp that blackens as it illuminates, a literary critic is a decidedly mixed blessing for an author.

The interpreter's creative response to the excremental object is paramount for a successful reading, yet Swift deliberately makes the tone of his shiterature ambivalent. As the multiple parallels to scenes from Rabelais should also make clear, what Bakhtin identified as the

[223] Swift, 421.
[224] Swift, 410.
[225] Swift, 314. Emphasis in original.

carnivalesque, joyful subversion of outsized bathroom humor, still exists in parts of Swift. As he oscillates between the horror and the carnivalesque, he never allows his reader to be too comfortable in a single interpretation. The carnivalesque side of Swift's shiterature has been neglected, but once recognized it offers redemption for the reader-critic and her powers of interpretation because, as Kristeva observed, "laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection."

CODA: GELATIN, CLOACA, AND THE RESISTANCE OF READING WASTE

In this dissertation, I have argued that metaphors of digestion, including the consumption and excretion that it so often entails, describe a hermeneutical training of an implied reader. Appetite for the work leads to its being read, then processed internally, with critical interpretation being the often-reviled output. This problem of the reader's power of interpretation, and its relative fecundity or wastefulness, has been at the center of my research as I find it a particularly important question for the time of great literary innovation around the invention of what we now call the novel. Just as I ended my introduction with a close reading of Samuel Johnson's portrait, I focus this concluding section on close readings of two contemporary art pieces with connections to the eighteenth century, the sculpture exhibition by artist collective Gelatin, *Vorm – Fellows – Attitude* (2018), and Wim Delvoye's *Cloaca Professional* (2010). Representations of excrement in the plastic arts are a great source for studying close reading because they allow observers less room to avoid the literal material and its implications than even Swift's evocative descriptions. These artworks are the logical outcome of Strephon and Lady Mary Montagu's lessons in aestheticizing waste matter; and indeed Vaucanson's digesting duck inspired Wim Delvoye to create the *Cloaca*. The questions raised by these modern works are not so different from eighteenth-century concerns, except, perhaps, that the threat of being overwhelmed by our own waste is more imminent than ever – both with excrement, as with the problem of relocating the New York City area's biosolids, and with pollution more generally.[226] While excrement is remarkably resistant to reinterpretation, it is starting to be repackaged as useful in some contexts – New York City's biosolids were eventually repackaged as nutritionally

[226] "What To Do About The Poo Choo-Choo?"

dense fertilizer, and fecal transplants are increasingly being used to treat illnesses otherwise resistant to treatment, our feces being evidence of an unseen "microbiome" and its relative health.[227] Both *Vorm – Fellows – Attitude* and *Cloaca* depict excrement – enormous sculptural installations in the former and the real deal in the latter – and challenge their viewers to give it their sustained attention, and to consider their reactions to it. This coda offers relatively short descriptions and readings of these very suggestive pieces of contemporary art, which could easily each be the subject of their own chapters. My intention here is to extract the most salient comparisons for a final conclusion about how works with digestive subjects both seduce and resist interpretation.

[227] "New York City's Poop Train"; Bakken et al., "Treating Clostridium Difficile Infection with Fecal Microbiota Transplantation"; Eakin, "The Excrement Experiment."

GELATIN: *VORM-FELLOWS-ATTITUDE*

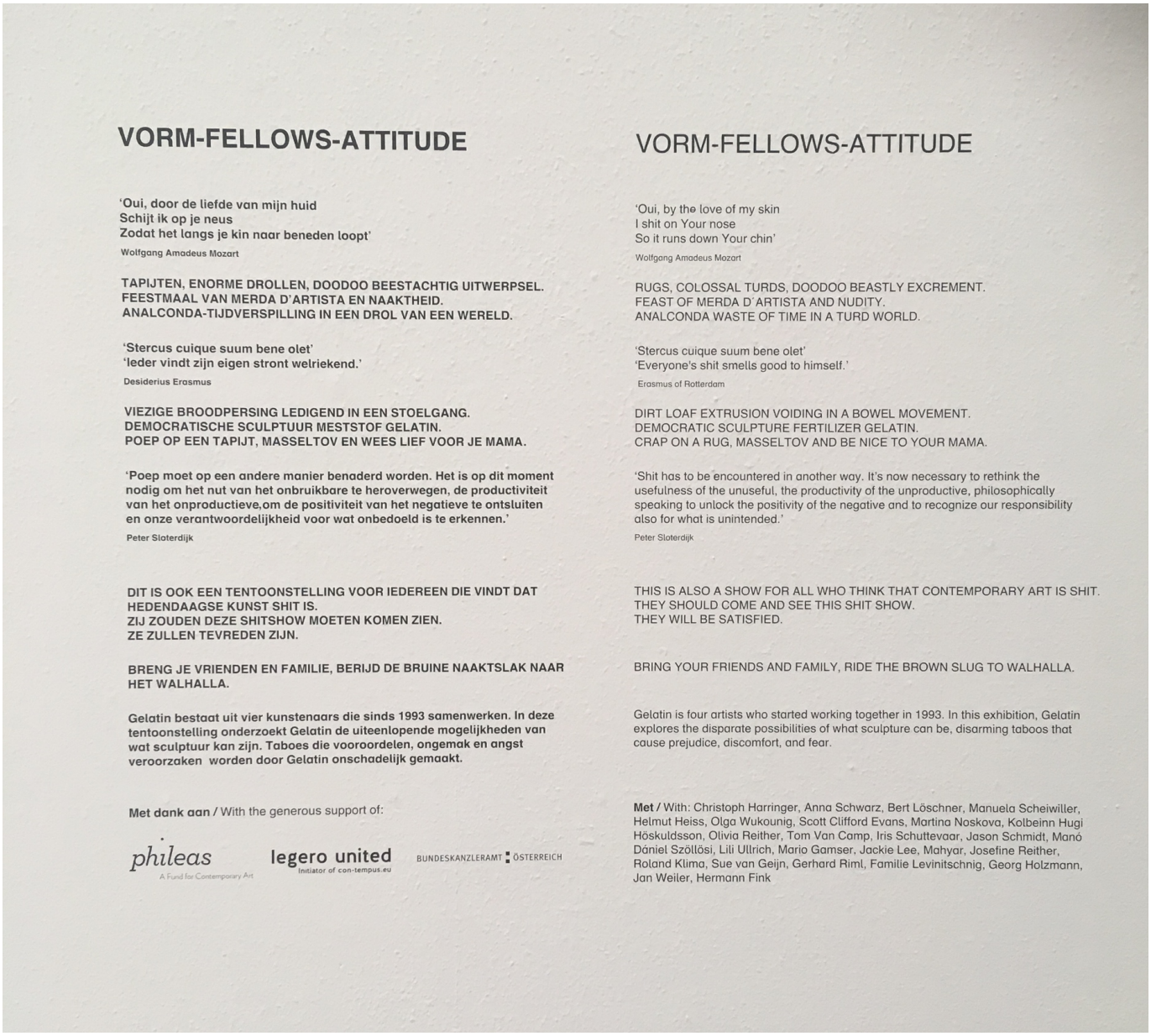


Exhibit 1
All photos author's own

Here they are, reaching toward the sublime.

As a *New York Times* article's teaser described, "The Vienna-based art collective Gelatin has installed four huge fecal sculptures in a Dutch museum. Repulsed? As yourself why."[228] Repulsion might be a common first response to the subject of these sculptures, but Gelatin's playful presentation means that it is unlikely to be the final reaction. Viewers can walk around – and inside – these realistically depicted, monumental turds to get up close and personal with that which is usually hidden and flushed away at the first opportunity, but Gelatin also mediates viewers' experience, offering several cues for interpretation along the way.

Commissioned by the Boijmans Museum in Rotterdam, the four members of the artist collective, Tobias Urban, Ali Janka, Florian Reither, and Wolfgang Gantner, created larger-than-life turds made out of enormous plaster casts covered in thick, brown clay, which take advantage

[228] Siegal, "In This Exhibition, You Walk Through Excrement."

of an enormous, well-lit gallery. Visitors to the exhibit first walk into a dressing room of anatomically explicit, cartoonish, naked body costumes that they are encouraged to wear over their own clothes during their visit to the exhibit. According to the artists, these costumes are meant to provide "a one-hour holiday from yourself … and it works." Visitors next confront the writing on the wall, but instead of the typical analysis by a museum curator, they find a collaborative manifesto playing with the notion that "contemporary art is shit" punctuated by fecally-relevant quotations by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Peter Sloterdijk (Exhibit 1). The quotations and the manifesto elements (in capital letters) are arranged in conversation with each other, like lines of dialogue in a play with many characters. Only at the end, in smaller font, is there a brief, third-person summary: "Gelatin explores the disparate possibilities of what sculpture can be, disarming taboos that cause prejudice, discomfort, and fear." Next, the viewer enters the gallery, which is filled with four distinct and enormous turd shapes, one for each artist, custom-designed for (and in) the space. All of them bear marks of being formed – as excrement and as sculptures. The largest one is sinuous and faintly segmented as if by a colon. There are abrupt start and end points, puckered by an imagined anus. The hardened clay exteriors to each sculpture are rough, mixed with hay, but still sensual, bearing the mark of fingers raked through the still wet mixture and thus giving the impression that the sculptures might still be soft. Each sits on one or several "elegant Persian rugs, like welcome-home gifts left by a huge, vengeful dog."[229] In a video interview presented at the installation, the artists claim that the shit and the Persian carpets are meant to make each other more beautiful. Evidencing an aspiration towards the sublime, each sculpture leads to a tidy point, stopping just short of the of the ceiling, which being white, expansive, and diffusely lit, seemed to go up

[229] Siegal.

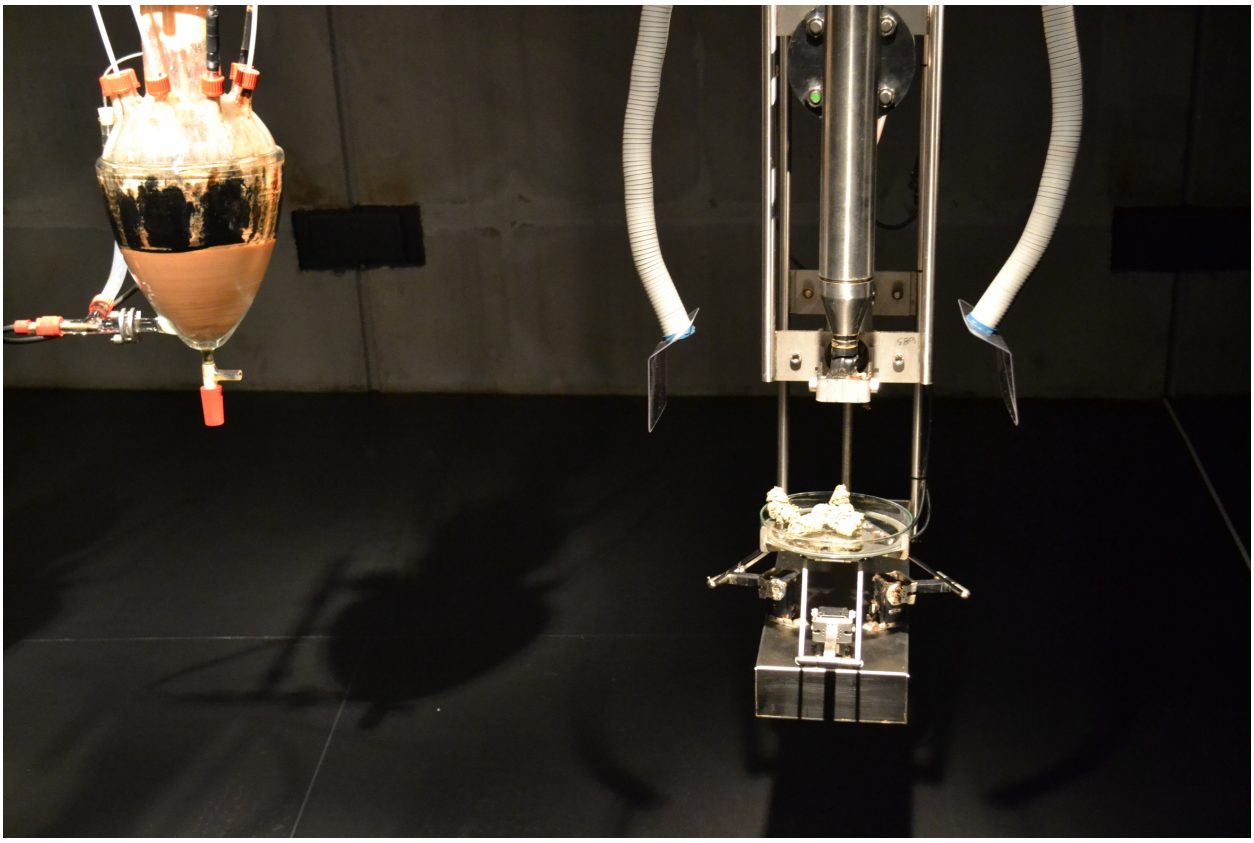
interminably. In person, the sculptures seemed astonishing and oddly delightful. The realistic impression was only broken by noticing a small, accidental hole in one of the sculptures, which revealed Styrofoam underneath that squeaked when touched. As different groups of people cycled through the gallery – students, parents with young children, tourists, and pensioners – no one could resist giggling by the end of their examination of the sculptures, not even the guards on duty.

A video at the exhibit introducing and interviewing the authors alongside the museum curator offered more interpretive suggestions – and fodder for interpretation. This installation was compared to their "discovery" of the "kakabet," an alphabet drawn out of feces, as well as their "democratic sculpture," a pissoir dubbed *Zapf de Pipi*, in which wintertime museum-goers' urine was collected in an outhouse in a gallery, and dripped outside forming dramatic, yellow icicles. When asked why they focused on poop for this piece, they brought back the theme of democratic art, citing that poop was inherently "inclusive," that it "brings art back to the people," that it was "a celebration," and a "positive symbol," as well as being "delicious." "Why *not* poop?" one artist finally responded. They also expressed interest in the materiality of their subject, saying, "We like to use the body, brainless, as pure construction material," and that these sculptures were a "celebration of form" and of "giving form." They emphasized how no machines were involved in the making of these sculptures celebrating malleable humanity, but rather that they were molded by the body, the surfaces showing signs of their hands. Their explanations simultaneously displayed theoretical sophistication (referencing the philosophy of Peter Sloterdijk and the anthropology of Marcel Mauss, who claimed that excrement is the first gift all children give to their parents), and rejected overly assiduous interpretations, dismissing

questions at some point with, “We don’t give a shit, actually.”[230] While Gelatin claim, “We’re not against anything, this is not a big critique. We don’t give a shit,” they also acknowledge that their work is meant to provoke discussion. While Gelatin provide a clear point of view on what their sculptures represent and reinforce that message with playful and joyful antics in the video, they also seem to resist overly complex clarifications of significance, as if these would inhibit the explanatory force of experiencing the installation first-hand. It is as though they expect the feces, in such a context, and so long as their audience plays along, to speak for themselves.

DELVOYE: *CLOACA*

[230] Mauss, *The Gift*.



The top photo shows the entire setup of *Cloaca Professional*. In the second, Jim Habel who works "front of house" at the MONA, feeds the *Cloaca*. The last photo shows the feces produced.
Photos by Evan Bruno

"A bit tedious to watch and stinks."
- Review of *Cloaca Professional*, *The Saturday Age*, 26 February 2011

Jacques de Vaucanson's now-destroyed automaton, the *Digesting Duck* (1739), inspired Wim Delvoye to create *Cloaca Professional* (2010). While Vaucanson only created the illusion of mechanical digestion, Delvoye actually created a functioning microbiome, in consultation with scientists, which needs to be fed twice a day and excretes once a day. Delvoye has created ten Cloaca machines thus far, each slightly different, but all of which "arguably take the art of imitation, mimesis, to its logical conclusion."[231] He purportedly created the first Cloaca with a

[231] Clark, "A Defecation Machine."

sample of his own intestinal bacteria. The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Tasmania is the one museum in the world he has entrusted to keep one in its permanent collection, and it was commissioned specifically for the space where it is now exhibited: "The elegant design, with hanging vessels shaped like ancient Greek amphorae was partly dictated by the low ceiling here at Mona."[232] However, the vessels resemble so many other things as well: IV bags, udders, and breasts. Museum workers attentively feed *Cloaca* twice a day with meals catered by the museum café (between "sips" of water, a croissant filled with ham and cheese and a thick slice of hummingbird cake on the day I visited). *Cloaca* is the sum of its connected parts in which food is shuttled through a digestive process. It starts with a feeding station where the food is served with a knife and fork into a blender bowl, travels through a first tube, representing an esophagus, and is mixed with the contents of two vessels containing hydrochloric acid and sodium hydroxide to balance the microbiome's PH levels. The slurry then moves into five successive vessels of which the first two process food as in the stomach and the last three as in the small intestine. Finally, there is a large metal tube, representing the large intestine, that swirls the resulting feces onto a petri dish the size of a salad plate, ending with pinchers that, like a rectum, cut off the soft serve poop, which varies in appearance depending on *Cloaca's* diet. By the time it excretes, once a day, the whole gallery is overwhelmingly malodorous, and it farts throughout the day as well.

Although the material facts of *Cloaca* are fairly straight-forward, its meaning is far less so, as suggested by the various valences of its name. Michel Onfray places *Cloaca* in a cynical-sadist philosophical tradition that he charts from Diogenes to the Marquis de Sade, and the name itself comes from the Latin for "sewer": "the *Cloaca Maxima* or 'Great Sewer' in ancient Rome was one of the world's earliest systems for disposing of a city's waste." In zoological anatomy,

[232] Clark.

"cloaca" refers to the opening that "serves as a combined digestive, urinary, and reproductive tract in birds, reptiles, and amphibians. The only mammals with a cloaca are the Australian egg-laying monotremes, the platypus and the echidna."[233] Others have argued that Delvoye's use of "Cloaca" denotes a proper name rather than either of these meanings, especially since it is never preceded by an article.[234] A museum staff member seemed to confirm this interpretation when he revealed that each of Delvoye's *Cloaca*s develops an individuality and gender that its caretakers maintain: "When you clean up something's poop, you feel like you really know it." This one at the MONA, for instance, he claimed "is definitely a woman," which he called "Chloe."[235] However, *Cloaca*'s humanity is undermined by the sheer effort to make it appear so, as it "requires an enormous input by way of finance and technological and scientific knowledge, while its output is something that everyone produces without having to pay for it or learn how to do it."[236] It is at once alive and mechanical, a system of organic matter, as evidenced most efficiently by how it excretes each day "like clockwork." This industrious effort to produce the most banal fact of life also confuses whether *Cloaca* constitutes "art" rather than mere mechanics. A MONA curator claims, "*Cloaca* is not just the name of an art work, or even a series of art works. It is an enterprise," which Delvoye has commercialized so successfully that "every 'series' of packaged excrement produced has apparently sold out," at prices ranging from USD 1,000 to EUR 7,500.[237]

Ultimately, the fact of commercial success and its mechanical nature do not disqualify *Cloaca* from being "art." Rather, the debate about whether *Cloaca* qualifies as "art" seems to

[233] Clark.
[234] Foncé, "Cloaca: Receptacle of Connotations, Producer of... Well, Meanings," 8.
[235] Habel, Interview with Front of House MONA Staff about Cloaca Professional by Wim Delvoye.
[236] Foncé, "Cloaca: Receptacle of Connotations, Producer of... Well, Meanings," 18.
[237] Clark, "A Defecation Machine."

come down to its subject matter: "when excrement is introduced in an artistic context," it "usually arouses reactions of resistance because the sacrosanct status of Art is being tainted and dragged down: an act of iconoclasm, not related to destruction but to the axiological undermining of the dignity and status of Fine Arts in our culture."[238] This is an interpretation echoed Dannatt who qualifies that *Cloaca* is "true 'art'" only "by the ludicrously low standards we now use to identify such stuff," and in the assessment of filmmaker Ben Lewis on his program, *Art Safari*: "This is, of course, silly art: Delvoye's work satirizes the art world" and "makes the ultimate criticism of modern art – that most of it is crap; that the art world has finally disappeared up its own backside.'"[239] As Delvoye told Lewis, "When I was going to art school, all my family said I was wasting my time, and now I have made a work of art about waste."[240]

While Delvoye's remark initially seems to support a reading of *Cloaca* as an elaborate, critical joke on the art world, it actually hinges on dual senses of "waste," figurative and literal, verb and noun. Perhaps paradoxically, this does not seem to insist on the an absolute interpretation of *Cloaca* as waste per se. Rather, it draws attention to an inherent fecundity of meaning in Delvoye's subject. Delvoye is "first and foremost a plastic artist who conceives of his works of art as such" – rather than as totalizing cultural critiques – "with a great deal of tolerance as far as the observer's interpretation is concerned."[241] This "tolerance" for multiple interpretations from all kinds of points of view inherent in *Cloaca* is reflected in Delvoye's sometimes contradictory pronouncements on the meaning of his work. By turns he celebrates the productive capacity of art (he claims to have produced a "live thing" with *Cloaca*), lauds its

[238] Foncé, "Cloaca: Receptacle of Connotations, Producer of... Well, Meanings," 17.
[239] Dannatt, "Lav Lab," 35.
[240] Ben Lewis, 'This little critic went to market', *The Telegraph*, London, 27 November 2005, as quoted in Clark, "A Defecation Machine."
[241] Foncé, "Cloaca: Receptacle of Connotations, Producer of... Well, Meanings," 24.

democratic aspect (shit "shows no difference between gender, race, age, class, or anything else"), and indicts contemporary culture (claiming that excrement is the most futile substance, the only thing that all humans will (and are willing) to create).[242] Delvoye even creates dual economies for the excrement *Cloaca* produces: he sells of some it in limited editions to collections, but he asked the MONA not to put that *Cloaca*'s excrement to any useful purpose. Not even allowing it to be added to a compost pile, he insists that it must be thrown in the trash.[243]

Delvoye's exploitation of the dualities contained in the term "waste," as well as the plethora of possible interpretations of *Cloaca*, all suggest that to equate "excrement" with "waste" is shortsighted. If *Cloaca* is understood as "a work of art that produces works of art," its excrement must be understood not to be the end of interpretation, but only the beginning.[244] Thus, a pronouncement like Foncé's, that "Delvoye's work is always literal, never literary," is misguided.[245] Just as a word or any other semiotic sign can contain literal and figurative meanings at the same time, *Cloaca* can both be a functional, literal machine and a physical manifestation of mechanical metaphors describing man ("he's a machine"). Or, alternatively, "every [*Cloaca*] represents both machine-as-human and human-as-machine and the whole enterprise is clearly an epitome of consumption."[246] Clark describes the interplay between literal and figurative meaning well: "[Delvoye's] art is absolutely transparent. What you see is what you get – but, importantly, what you see is still a conundrum."[247] After a couple of hours of

[242] Ayerza, "Lacanian Ink 19/Cloaca."
[243] Habel, Interview with Front of House MONA Staff about Cloaca Professional by Wim Delvoye.
[244] Clark, "A Defecation Machine." Excrement being an impetus to interpretation recalls how Walter Benjamin locates the beginning of reading in the interpretation of material signs like entrails: "At the dawn of humanity, this reading from stars, entrails, and coincidences was reading per se." [Benjamin, Jennings, and Bullock, "The Doctrine of the Similar," 697.]
[245] Foncé, "Cloaca: Receptacle of Connotations, Producer of... Well, Meanings," 12.
[246] Clark, "A Defecation Machine."
[247] Clark.

viewing *Cloaca* I am overwhelmed by nausea and need to get out of the room fast. On my way out, the installation's security guard asks what I thought of it. "It's not a life-changing piece of art," I reply, "but I think that's also the point." "Yeah," she agrees, "it's not like it's not something we've seen every day."

CONCLUSION

It is tempting to compare Gelatin's joyful scatology to Rabelais's "carnivalesque" mode and Delvoye's insistence on the futility of *Cloaca*'s excrement to Swift's bleak, satirical view of human nature. However, that would be to miss one of the main lessons these works teach us – namely, the inherent fecundity of meaning of any excremental work. Futility and playfulness coexist. Sloterdijk suggests how refuse requires new ways of reading:

> Shit has to be encountered in another way. It is now necessary to rethink the usefulness of the unuseful, the productivity of the unproductive, philosophically speaking: to unlock the positivity of the negative and to recognize our responsibility also for what is unintended.[248]

Even if an artist like Delvoye insists that his work is not useful, there is a purpose to that unusefulness – an opening of a new interpretive space. Likewise, this dissertation has shown the aesthetic fecundity to Swift's "shiterature" in how it begets new works of art, as well as the threat contained in Fielding's narrator's offer to fulfill his readers' appetites by force-feeding. When Sloterdijk writes of recognizing our responsibility for what is unintended, he is speaking to the importance of the interpreter in giving voice to the complex interplay of meanings at work

[248] Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, 151.

– speaking for the mute piece of art, as Frye would put it. Literary critics probably cannot be reminded of this enough, although I would notice that, at least in the eighteenth-century works with digestive themes that are the main subject of this dissertation, the necessity of the critic is embedded from the start. Fielding addresses and instructs an implied reader in narratorial asides that can be understood as part and parcel of the plot – a plot which in this reading becomes less about the marriage between Sophia and Tom than about the resolution of isolating appetites (the reader's *and* Tom's) into a form of plural wisdom. Much of Swift's "shiterature" focuses on the excremental nature of the critic, but the type of aestheticizing reading his character Strephon performs on the detritus of his lover, and Montagu's response to that poem, also suggest a way to close read waste to create something new. Literary art creates interpretive art, as mechanical art begets excremental art in *Cloaca*. Digestive imitation in Pope, then, is not only a critique of contemporary hack writers, but also a necessary literary metabolism that can revitalize the classics and reach new readers, as Pope does in his translations of Homer, imitations of Horace, and versifications of Donne. Pope's digestive poetics thus shows how a good writer must also be an interpreter of a literary heritage, and the kind of reader who incorporates their reading into their very being. Likewise, the role of the critic seems to already be embedded in Gelatin and Delvoye's contemporary poop art. Both pieces were commissioned by the museums where they are now housed, and their material manifestations were dictated by the spaces they were pre-allocated – the curators were in cahoots with the artists before the art even existed. The role of the critic is already embedded in every one of these excremental works, revealing the interpreter's role to be as creative as the artist's. A work of art – literary or plastic – requires both an artist and a critic from its inception.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 8th ed. Boston: Thomson, Wadsworth, 2005.

———. *The Mirror and the Lamp : Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1958. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/1705061.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. London: Verso, 2005.

Allen, Stewart Lee. *In the Devil's Garden : A Sinful History of Forbidden Food*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2002. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/4166706.

Appelbaum, Robert. *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections : Literature, Culture, and Food among the Early Moderns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/5963415.

Ayerza, Josefina. "Lacanian Ink 19/Cloaca." Accessed September 23, 2016. http://www.lacan.com/frameXIX7.htm.

Bacon, Francis. *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*. Edited by Michael Kiernan. Oxford : Clarendon, 1985.

Bakhtin, M. M. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1968.

Bakken, Johan S., Thomas Borody, Lawrence J. Brandt, Joel V. Brill, Daniel C. Demarco, Marc Alaric Franzos, Colleen Kelly, et al. "Treating Clostridium Difficile Infection with Fecal Microbiota Transplantation." *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology : The Official Clinical Practice Journal of the American Gastroenterological Association* 9, no. 12 (December 2011): 1044–49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cgh.2011.08.014.

Barnett, Louise. "The Mysterious Narrator: Another Look at 'The Lady's Dressing Room.'" *Concerning Poetry* 9, no. 2. Accessed April 16, 2017. http://vp5qw4uf5x.search.serialssolutions.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rfr_id=info%3Asid%2Fsummon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Ajournal&rft.genre=article&rft.atitle=The+Mysterious+Narrator%3A+Another+Look+at+%27The+Lady%27s+Dressing+Room%27&rft.jtitle=Concerning+Poetry&rft.au=Barnett%2C+Louise+K&rft.date=1976-01-01&rft.issn=0010-5201&rft.volume=9&rft.issue=2&rft.spage=29&rft.externalDocID=R02172821.

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Translated by Richard Miller. Oxford: Basil-Blackwell, 1990.

Belanger, Terry. "Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England." In *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, edited by Isabel. Rivers. London: St. Martin's, 1982.

Bell, Ian. "Not Lucre's Madman: Pope, Money, and Independence." In *Alexander Pope: Essays for the Tercentenary*, edited by Colin. Nicholson. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988.

Bell, Ian A. *Henry Fielding: Authorship and Authority*. Studies in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Literature. London ; New York: Longman, 1994.

Benjamin, Walter, Michael William Jennings, and Marcus Paul Bullock. "The Doctrine of the Similar." In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.

Bliss, Michael. "Fielding's Bill of Fare in Tom Jones." *ELH* 30, no. 3 (September 1, 1963): 236–43. https://doi.org/10.2307/2872037.

Bogel, Fredric V. *Acts of Knowledge: Pope's Later Poems*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981.
———. "Dulness Unbound: Rhetoric and Pope's Dunciad." *PMLA* 97, no. 5 (October 1, 1982): 844–55. https://doi.org/10.2307/462175.
———. *New Formalist Criticism: Theory and Practice*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
———. *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
Brown, Laura. *Fables of Modernity: Literature and Culture in the English Eighteenth Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
Brown, Norman Oliver. *Life against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*. 2nd ed. Middletown, Conn. : Scranton, Pa: Wesleyan University Press ; Distributed by Harper & Row, 1985.
Chase, Cynthia. "Desire and Identification in Lacan and Kristeva." In *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Richard. Feldstein and Judith Roof. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
Chibka, Robert L. "Taking 'The Serious' Seriously: The Introductory Chapters of 'Tom Jones.'" *The Eighteenth Century* 31, no. 1 (April 1, 1990): 23–45.
Chico, Tita. "Privacy and Speculation in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Cultural Critique*, no. 52 (2002): 40–60.
Clark, Jane. "A Defecation Machine." *The O Guide to the MONA*, December 14, 2016.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "On the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts." In *Criticism: The Major Texts*, edited by Walter Jackson Bate. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970.
Cottom, Daniel. *Cannibals & Philosophers : Bodies of Enlightenment*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/4028401.
———. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Digestion." *Representations*, no. 66 (1999): 52–74. https://doi.org/10.2307/2902879.
Dannatt, Adrian. "Lav Lab." In *Cloaca*, edited by Wim Delvoye. Ludio/Muhka, 2000.
Dennis, John. *The Critical Works of John Dennis*. Edited by Edward Niles. Hooker. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1939.
Derrida, Jacques, and Avital Ronell. "The Law of Genre." *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 55–81.
Donne, John. *Poems, by J.D. VVith Elegies on the Authors Death*, 1633. http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/search/fulltext?ACTION=ByID&ID=D00000998570250000&SOURCE=var_spell.cfg&WARN=N&FILE=../session/1492294618_10729.
Doody, Margaret Anne. "Swift among the Women." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 18 (January 1, 1988): 68–92. https://doi.org/10.2307/3508190.
Eakin, Emily. "The Excrement Experiment." *The New Yorker*, November 24, 2014. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/01/excrement-experiment.
Earle, Peter. *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society, and Family Life in London, 1660-1730*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. 1st American ed edition. New York: Urizen Books, 1978.

Elliott, Robert C. *The Literary Persona*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
Empson, William. "Tom Jones." In *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tom Jones: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/1396051.
Fielding, Henry, T. Keymer, and Alice Wakely. *The History of Tom Jones*. Penguin Classics. Cambridge, England ; London: Penguin, 2005. http://proxy.library.cornell.edu/login?url=http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:pr:Z001596902:0.
Fish, Stanley Eugene. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.
Foncé, Yonah. "Cloaca: Receptacle of Connotations, Producer of... Well, Meanings." In *Cloaca*, edited by Wim Delvoye. Ludio/Muhka, 2000.
Freud, Sigmund, David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton. *The Uncanny*. Penguin Classics. New York ; London: Penguin Books, 2003.
Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
Gee, Sophie. *Making Waste: Leftovers and the Eighteenth-Century Imagination*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010.
Greene, Jody. *The Trouble with Ownership: Literary Property and Authorial Liability in England, 1660-1730*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.
Greene, Thomas M. *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
Grundy, Isobel. *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/3461180.
Gurr, Jens Martin. "Worshipping Cloacina in the Eighteenth Century: Functions of Scatology in Swift, Pope, Gay, and Sterne." In *Taboo and Transgression in British Literature from the Renaissance to the Present*, edited by Stefan Horlacher, Stefan Glomb, and Lars Heiler, 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
Habel, Jim. Interview with Front of House MONA Staff about Cloaca Professional by Wim Delvoye, December 14, 2016.
Hatfield, Glenn W. *Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.
Herz, Rachel. *That's Disgusting: Unraveling the Mysteries of Repulsion*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2012.
Howell, Wilbur Samuel. *Poetics, Rhetoric, and Logic: Studies in the Basic Disciplines of Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.
Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch. 2d ed. /. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.
Hunter, J. Paul. *Before Novels : The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction /*. 1st ed. New York : Norton, c1990.
Hutchens, Eleanor Newman. *Irony in Tom Jones*. University: University of Alabama Press, 1965.
Ingrassia, Catherine. "Money." In *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*, edited by Pat Rogers, 175–85. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Jacobus, Mary. "Madonna: Like a Virgin; or, Freud, Kristeva, and the Case of the Missing Mother." *Oxford Literary Review* 8, no. 1/2 (1986): 35–50.

Janes, Regina. “Fielding and the Case of the Misguided Reader.” In *Henry Fielding in Our Time: Papers Presented at the Tercentenary Conference*, edited by J. A. Downie. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008.
Kang, Minsoo. *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011.
Karian, Stephen E. “Swift as a Manuscript Poet.” In *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book*, edited by Paddy Bullard and J. McLaverty. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
Kelleher, Paul. “‘The Glorious Lust of Doing Good’: ‘Tom Jones’ and the Virtues of Sexuality.” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 38, no. 2/3 (April 1, 2005): 165–92.
Kenner, Professor Hugh. *The Counterfeiters: Counterfeiters: An Historical Comedy*. Normal (Ill.): Dalkey Archive Press, 2005.
Kickel, Katherine E. *Novel Notions: Medical Discourse and the Mapping of the Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*. Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory. New York: Routledge, 2007.
Kilgour, Maggie. *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.
Konigsberg, Ira. *Narrative Technique in the English Novel: Defoe to Austen*. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1985.
Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
Lehmann, Gilly. *The British Housewife*. Totnes, Devon: Prospect Books, 2003.
Mack, Maynard. *Alexander Pope: A Life*. New York: W.W. Norton in association with Yale University Press, 1985.
Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift : The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London ; Routledge, 2002.
May, Robert. *The Accomplisht Cook: Or, The Art and Mystery of Cookery. Wherein the Whole Art Is Revealed in a More Easie and Perfect Method Then Hath Been Publisht in Any Language* . London: Printed by R. W. for N. Brooke, 1660.
McLaverty, James. “Pope and the Book Trade.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*, edited by Pat Rogers. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Miller, J.H. “The Critic As Host.” In *Deconstruction and Criticism*, edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Seabury Press, 1979.
Montagu, Mary Wortley. *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*. Edited by Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
Napier, Elizabeth R. *Falling into Matter: Problems of Embodiment in English Fiction from Defoe to Shelley*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
“New York City’s Poop Train,” July 28, 2015. http://mentalfloss.com/article/66140/new-york-citys-poop-train.
Nussbaum, Felicity. “Juvenal, Swift, and The Folly of Love.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 9, no. 4 (1976): 540–52. https://doi.org/10.2307/2737794.
Nussbaum, Martha. “‘Secret Sewers of Vice’: Disgust, Bodies and the Law.” In *The Passions of Law*, edited by Susan Bandes. Critical America. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

O'Brien, Timothy D. "The Hungry Author and Narrative Performance in Tom Jones." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 25, no. 3 (July 1, 1985): 615–32. https://doi.org/10.2307/450499.
Parker, Jo Alyson. *The Author's Inheritance: Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, and the Establishment of the Novel*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998.
Phillips, Michael. "The Composition of Pope's Imitation of Horace, Satire II, I." In *Alexander Pope: Essays for the Tercentenary*, edited by Colin. Nicholson. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988.
Pope, Alexander. *Satires of Dr. John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's. Done into Modern English by Mr. Pope.* [Dublin], 1736. http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=cornell&tabID=T001&docId=CB3327343507&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
Pope, Alexander, and Edna Leake Steeves. *The Art of Sinking in Poetry: Martinus Scriblerus' Peri Bathous*. New York: King's Crown Press, 1952.
Potter, Tiffany. *Honest Sins : Georgian Libertinism and the Plays and Novels of Henry Fielding /*. Montreal ; McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.
Power, Henry. "Henry Fielding, Richard Bentley, and the 'Sagacious Reader' of 'Tom Jones.'" *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 61, no. 252 (November 1, 2010): 749–72.
Preston, John. *The Created Self; the Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970.
Price, Martin. *To the Palace of Wisdom; Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake*. 1st ed. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1964.
Quint, David. *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
Quintero, Ruben. *Literate Culture: Pope's Rhetorical Art*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992.
Rabb, Melinda Alliker. "House Of Mirrors: Imitations of Horace." In *Alexander Pope*, edited by Harold. Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.
———. "Remembering in Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room.'" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language; Austin* 32, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 375–396.
Rabelais, François. *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. London: Penguin Books, 2006. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/5922961.
Rawson, Claude. "The Mock-Edition Revisited: Swift to Mailer." In *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/8280566.
Richetti, John. "Ideology and Literary Form in Fielding's Tom Jones." In *Ideology and Form in Eighteenth-Century Literature*. Lubbock, Tex.: Texas Tech University Press, 1999. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/3481841.
Ricœur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. Translated by Robert Czerny. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983.
Riskin, Jessica. "The Defecating Duck, or, the Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life." *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 4 (2003): 599–633. https://doi.org/10.1086/377722.
Rose, Mark. *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Rudy, Seth. “Pope, Swift, and the Poetics of Posterity.” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 35, no. 3 (September 8, 2011): 1–28.
Saccamano, Neil. “Knowledge, Power, Allegory: Swift’s Tale and Neoclassical Literary Criticism.” In *Enlightening Allegory: Theory, Practice and Contexts of Allegory in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Kevin Lee Cope. AMS Studies in the Eighteenth Century, no. 18. New York: AMS Press, 1993.
———. “Parting with Prejudice: Hume, Identity, and Aesthetic Universality.” In *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850*, edited by Victoria Ann. Kahn, Neil Saccamano, and Daniela. Coli. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cornell/detail.action?docID=445414.
———. “Promises, Pillories, Pirates: Defoe’s Speculations in Print,” n.d.
Schmidt, Michael. *The Novel : A Biography*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/8489160.
Siegal, Nina. “In This Exhibition, You Walk Through Excrement.” *The New York Times*, June 12, 2018, sec. Arts. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/07/arts/design/gelatin-excrement-sculptures.html.
Sitter, John. “Pope’s Versification and Voice.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Alexander Pope*, edited by Pat Rogers, 37–48. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Sloterdijk, Peter. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Translated by Michael Eldred. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
Smith, Peter J. *Between Two Stools: Scatology and Its Representations in English Literature, Chaucer to Swift*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012.
Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *Desire and Truth : Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/1743662.
Spence, Joseph. *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from Conversation*. Edited by James Osborn. [New ed.]. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Oxford,: Clarendon P., 1966.
Stack, Frank. *Pope and Horace: Studies in Imitation*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
Struever, Nancy S. *The Language of History in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970.
Swift, Jonathan. *The Writings of Jonathan Swift; Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Criticism*. Edited by Robert A. Greenberg and William Bowman Piper. 1st ed. A Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 1973.
Terry, Richard. “Pope and Plagiarism.” *The Modern Language Review* 100, no. 3 (2005): 593–608.
Volk-Birke, Sabine. “Questions of Taste: The Critic as Connoisseur and the Hungry Reader.” In *The Pleasures and Horrors of Eating : The Cultural History of Eating in Anglophone Literature*. Goettingen: V&R unipress GmbH, 2010. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/7103827.
Watt, Ian. “Serious Reflections on ‘The Rise of the Novel.’” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 1, no. 3 (1968): 205–18. https://doi.org/10.2307/1345161.
———. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Weise, Wendy S. “Seeing and the Difference It Makes: Ocularity, Gender, and Space in Swift’s and Montagu’s ‘Dressing Room’ Satires.” *Women’s Studies* 35, no. 8 (December 2006): 707–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870600945600.

“What To Do About The Poo Choo-Choo? Alabama Town Deals With A Smelly Situation.” NPR.org. Accessed July 3, 2018. https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/04/07/600540644/what-to-do-about-the-poo-choo-choo-alabama-town-deals-with-a-smelly-situation.

Williams, Aubrey, ed. *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

Wimsatt, Jr., W.K. “Rhetoric and Poems.” In *Alexander Pope*, edited by Harold. Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

“World’s Oldest Joke Traced Back to 1900 BC.” *Reuters*, August 1, 2008. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-joke-odd/worlds-oldest-joke-traced-back-to-1900-bc-idUSKUA14785120080801.

Wright, Andrew. *Henry Fielding, Mask and Feast*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1965.

Wyrick, Deborah Baker. *Jonathan Swift and the Vested Word*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988. http://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/1513962.

Young, Edward. *Conjectures on Original Composition*. Leeds: Scolar Press, 1966.